COMMENTARY

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COMMENTARY

THE COMMUNIST

His Mentality and His Morals

HAROLD ROSENBERG

Much I prize the doubt. . . .
—Browning, "Rabbi Ben Ezra."

THE Englishman of Gilbert and Sullivan's era may have been born either a Liberal or a Conservative, but no one was ever born a Communist. Nor is this form of "greatness" ever thrust upon one. Nor is it something to be lightly grabbed, as the periodic party purges throughout the world attest. Becoming a Communist can only be achieved, the party chiefs often declare, through an intense process of self-transformation—a process that may never be relaxed without the risk of sliding back into an earlier condition of being. The psychological and ethical arduousness of making oneself a Bolshevik is also testified to by the Confessions of the Repentant Ex-Comrade which constitute such a lively branch of modern literature. As part of their Bolshevik discipline, the heroes of Koestler and others had to conquer every personal sentiment in themselves and attain the subjective state of professional executioners. The Communist's trained readiness to crush his sympathies, and the hallucinations that induce that readiness, cannot, however, be isolated from other aspects of his constructed character. In doing so, the confession literature, written from the point of view of moral disillusionment, tends to portray the Communist as a "sick" human being, rather than as a new coherent entity purposefully constructed out of human material.

The Communist, then, is an invented *type* into which a small fraction of contemporary humanity has been able to convert itself. This type was brought into the world by Lenin. He was, and is, its creator. We shall discuss later possible differences between the author and his creation. But reading the recent biographies of Lenin by David Shub (*Lenin: A Biography*) and Bertram Wolfe (*Three Who Made a Revolution*), one cannot fail to recognize in the personality of the founder of Bolshevism the primordial features of the Communist of today. Here is the man who struggles ceaselessly—"for twenty-four hours of the day" and even in his dreams, Axelrod noted—through organizational plot and coun-

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HAROLD ROSENBERG here draws together in a portrait what we have learned about the Bolshevik personality in thought and action in the three decades since the Russian Revolution, leaning particularly on two recent biographies of Lenin: *Lenin* by David Shub (Doubleday) and *Three Who Made a Revolution* by Bertram Wolfe (Dial). Mr. Rosenberg's most recent contribution to COMMENTARY, "Does the Jew Exist?" appeared in the January 1949 issue. He has published a volume of poetry, *Trance Above the Streets*, and has contributed to *Partisan Review, Kenyon Review, Les Temps Modernes*, and many other periodicals. Mr. Rosenberg was born in Brooklyn in 1906.

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ter-plot to grasp unchallenged control of the revolutionary movement, first of Russia then of the entire globe. This man is motivated, Wolfe wisely discerns, not by arrogance or lust for power but by his "unshakeable conviction of his own rightness." Primarily, he is a man whose every act is impelled by the certainty that he, and he alone, knows what must be done on behalf of the future of the revolution, and hence of mankind.

EVERY Communist is a small replica of this Man Who Knows. His knowledge is beyond human question, like that of the revolutionary leader in Sartre's movie *The Chips Are Down,* who through being dead has found out what will happen to the insurrection scheduled for the next day. The Communist, too, possesses a non-terrestrial prescience and can assert without the support of evidence what the situation is and what policy is required to meet it. Here, for example, in a pre-war Soviet film, is a Communist who has arrived at a collective farm far out in the steppes. Trust him to know that it is best for the farmers to stop slaughtering surplus cattle and take to clearing overgrown land for fodder. Or here, in a war film or novel, is a Communist at a battlefront. He does not, like the directing personnel of other armies, confine himself to giving orders and getting them carried out. More like a scout leader than a commander of men, he bears an aroma of perceiving what has been ordained. He will recognize the moment chosen by history for his company to stand and die against overwhelming odds. And he will know, too, how to scare up some trick to prevent this lethal decision from yielding its logical results. In factory work, in mining, in forestry, his role is always the same. And above all, in the revolution, source of his authority. What is the drama of the October revolution to the Communist but the Bolshevik—from Lenin himself in his flat or at a caucus to the leather-jacketed emissary among the peasants of some distant village—foreseeing everything, bringing everything to pass? (Actually, of course, even an account most biased on the side of "historical necessity," like Trotsky's, cannot describe the Bolshevik seizure of power without creating an impression of improvisation and chance that verges on the farcical. One recalls, for instance, Lenin in disguise yet recognized by everybody; Kerensky leaving the Winter Palace in an open car waving to the insurrectionists; the Commissar of War on a horse with a pistol in his hand galloping to the defense of Petrograd.)

All the other traits of the Communist are derived from his knowingness. For instance, his calm. This commissar seems a bit on edge as to the success of the revolutionary measure he has just proposed for planing pineboards or attacking a convoy. Don't worry. His anxiety is intended only to arouse suspense in his audience of disciples—like an acrobat deliberately missing a try in order to make his curtain act seem a greater triumph. Actually, the Bolshevik knows his plan will succeed, and is internally at rest. Indeed, his calm is deeper than that which comes from mere confidence in a specific outcome. For even if his project does not succeed, it will still have succeeded. It will have been the correct thing to do historically; there was no alternative; and if he was mistaken who could have been right? Since history is continuous, the present failure, like that of the Red Army in 1941, is inevitably a contribution to the larger success that will become visible in the long run.

THE Communist's composure has a fatherly cast, almost divinely fatherly. Like a wise parent, he knows that growth and the victory of reason are compelled to issue by way of simple-mindedness, incomprehension, misguided exuberance. For those of his non-Communist fellow citizens who possess these handicaps he therefore keeps prepared the all-enduring smile with which toddlers are encouraged. Before him shines the pedagogical motto of Lenin: PATIENTLY EXPLAIN. As we shall see, this slogan does not apply to disputes with intellectual opponents; it is reserved for the instruction of the guiltlessly backward. Who these are depends, of course, on the party line—even Catholics and capitalists may during "front" periods be included among the innocently lagging; at other times

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they are malicious schemers. Paternal affection streams from the responsibility-laden young Communist upon the gray head of the illiterate Ivan who remains folkloristically attached to his hand plough or machete until the superiority of the tractor has been explained to him; upon the liberal professor who is studying the rudiments of Marxism; upon the corpse of the boy of fourteen who has blown himself up under a German tank. The love of the Bolshevik is the love of the shepherd for his flock; and its tolerant facial expression, made up of a mixture of smugness, boredom, and absent-mindedness, is duplicated on Sunday mornings in homes and chapels throughout the world. It is a physiognomical summary of the social worker's ideal of human existence. The pastoral species of affection comes into existence only in the presence of those standing in an acknowledged relation of intellectual inferiority. The response it aims at is the open mouth and widened eyes of sudden grateful comprehension.

Fables of sheep, idyllic as they are, contain the psychology of impending doom. The wolf is either lurking at the edge of the peaceful meadow or, disguised in sheep's clothing, has penetrated the flock itself. Without this ever-present threat, the shepherd's vocation would amount to but little. In each situation, fortunately, the Communist discovers the traditional lupine foe. "We must remember," said Lenin, "that we are at all times but a hair's breadth from invasion." Curiously, however, the Communist's wolf exists in a kind of double image—he snarls and shows his fangs at the frontier, yet at the same instant baas fraternally close at hand under his false sheep's head. Of course, he is really two separate wolves. One is the outside wolf, from Czarism to American imperialism; the other, the inside, or sheep's clothing wolf, from Menshevism to Trotskyism. But the Communist, perhaps because the sheep fable conforms in some profound way to his metaphysics, always insists that there exists but one monolithic wolf. In his factional struggles long before the Revolution, Lenin discovered the anisotropic formula: Menshevik-Czarist. Since then, Liberals have been White Guardists; Socialists, British, German, French, Japanese, etc., imperialists; Trotskyists and rightist, "agents of fascism."

The wolf-in-the-sheep image is the most dire. Both Shub and Wolfe quote Lenin's characterization of his own attack on the Mensheviks as "traitors" in 1907: "That tone, that formulation, is not designed to convince, but to break the ranks, not to correct a mistake of the opponent but to annihilate him, to wipe him off the face of the earth." The wolfy wolf represents merely a physical opposition that may be evaded or pacified by compromise. The sheepy wolf, however, threatens to destroy *the very ground of the Communist's existence, his shepherdom;* and he must be annihilated. This enemy from within represents any opposition to Communist knowledge born not of ignorance but of contrary knowledge. The offending knowledge need not be political or historical; it is enough that it leads to informed, rather than naive, non-cooperation. This collective farmer opposes clearing brambles and favors eating the calves because, besides wanting meat, he has calculated that the land is not suitable for tillage—he is a Social Revolutionary White Guardist. This worker withholds enthusiasm for a new speed-up because in his experience such methods bring no increase either in wages or in output—he is a Trotskyist fascist saboteur. *Principled* resistance to the Communist's historical omniscience is the malignant mark of the evil third person in the sheep fable. Turned in his direction, the Communist's face has shed its benign ennui. The bored father has turned into the alert hunter. Now the pastoral vocation, which in Lenin's language makes it "one's duty to wrest the masses" from rival leadership, reveals its most active function—to exterminate.

THE Communist belongs to an elite of the knowing. Thus he is an intellectual. But since all truth has been automatically bestowed upon him by his adherence to the party, he is an intellectual who need not think. The Communist is often criticized for his renunciation of independent thought. But what good is mental activity if one can know more

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by giving it up? The Communist is contemptuous of the non-Communist intellectual. The latter goes through all the motions of thinking, but at best he can only hope to arrive at what is already known. At best. More likely his thinking will lead him into error. Not one Bolshevik with a mind of his own who failed at one time or another to deviate from and "betray" Leninism. Actually, the intellectuals are superfluous people. Given the present unfinished state of history, they may have certain uses when friendly. But they have no future, and it is wise to be suspicious of them. The unlettered are much to be preferred.

In this connection, the mind of the Communist is involved in a profound gnostic mystery: thought reels on the rim of error, while knowledge is given to the simple. Ask the worker or the peasant and he will tell you what is hidden from the scholar and the genius. After he had moved into the Kremlin, Shub tells us, "Lenin enjoyed incognito contact with the common people of Moscow, talking with the man on the street, the common laborer and peasant, to get their honest opinions on the Bolshevik cause." Socialists who expressed *their* "honest opinions" were either banished or shot. In his debate with Trotsky on dialectics and logic some years ago, James Burnham cried out indignantly when his opponent spoke of "the dialectics of a fox." Why not? If the worker has his way of knowing that is superior to Martov's or Plekhanov's, why not a fox? Or better still a sheep, since the fox is notoriously tainted with intellectualism and besides must be harder to organize. Not that it is outrageous to speak of the wisdom of the simpleton, of animals, or even of things. It is in the best mystical and poetic tradition and is supported by the experience of great minds. But if messages of grains of sand or old women in the forest are more revealing than the discourse of intellectuals, why should one kind of intellectual, the Marxist-Leninist, be privileged?*

* The privilege is related, of course, to the Bolshevik conception of a party composed of "professional revolutionists" who introduce Marxist "science" into the directionless struggles of the masses.

I regret that it is not possible to develop further at this time this fundamental contradiction of Marxism.

Since he alone has the correct answer, the Communist everywhere seeks to control the activities of others. He does not always seek power—we have seen that with Lenin power was not a lust. Power itself is but one means, though perhaps the supreme one, for manipulating people. The Communist may consent to renounce this means temporarily, but never for a moment does he cease to reach for control. To this end he makes himself an expert in the mechanics of organization, for through it men can be controlled with or without authority. To the Communist the map of the world is an organization chart: Lenin's national program cannot be understood without taking this into account. From 1903 to 1917 the life of Lenin is a saga of contriving majorities in conventions, splitting and annihilating opposition factions, packing editorial boards and committees, challenging credentials, laying hold of membership lists, party funds, communication facilities. "His line of thought," said Rosa Luxemburg near the beginning of his leadership, "is cut to the control of party activity." Wolfe points out that factional disputes engaged Lenin's attention to a greater extent in 1912-14 than the impending World War.

To be engaged in combat without pause, "for twenty-four hours in the day," is the Communist's way of being equal to his world, whose primary law is combat. ("The history of all human society, past and present, has been the history of class struggles.") Courage is therefore indispensable to the Communist, and that he is courageous goes without saying. His courage, however, is of a different order than is met with elsewhere. The possibility of his own death simply does not interest him. Individual attachments, power over which gives death its terror, hold a secondary place in his existence. By temperament, understanding, values, the threatened curtailment of his personal future has no meaning to him. As for *the* future, he already knows what it will contain. Thus neither love nor curiosity

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contest his willingness to risk his life. In the face of torture, too, his own or another's, his courage preserves its distinction—since he lacks the reaction of *horror*. It is the strangeness of the inner state of the torturer, who resembles a human being, that freezes our spirit. We do not feel horror at the agony inflicted by the surgeon because we know why he "attacks" his patient. The Communist, accepting as sufficient his political explanation of torture, and knowing why his enemy inflicts it upon him, is never horrified by it. Thus enduring torture is for him a purely physical ordeal limited by the resistance capacity of his body. So far is he immune to the shock of mystery that even sadists among his tormentors appear to him in a political rather than a psychological or moral perspective; they only imagine they torture for pleasure, actually it is the policy they have accepted that turns them into fiends. Hence the Communist finds nothing questionable in the party's enlisting of former Gestapo or SS men in the service of Communism. The only issue for him is: have they abandoned the program that made them fascist murderers for one that makes them the vanguard of the working class?

THE readiness of the Communist to clasp to his bosom the hated enemy of yesterday and to denounce as traitors and monsters his former allies and even adored leaders has often led him to be considered cynical or immoral. Quite the contrary—such reversals of judgment and feeling are the very key to the Communist's morality and the fullest expression of his constructed character. Accompanied by the strongest passions, they have nothing in common with switches in attitude resulting from a mere absence or relaxation of principles. Morally weak or indifferent people may, for the sake of expediency, collaborate with individuals whom they have denounced and drop former friends as a liability; but this is merely a shift in relations. With the Communist a change in the policy of the party transforms *the nature itself* of the former friend or ally. At one stroke the imperialist Roosevelt disappears and is replaced by Roosevelt the democratic champion of the peoples—while the isolationist peace-lover of this morning emerges this afternoon as a masked Nazi. It is as if Roosevelt or Hitler had never lived before the day of the change—as if their entire existence were conferred upon them by the party line. Thus the Communist's judgments stem from a metaphysics of being, and are the moral extension of that metaphysics. The question of what a Churchill or a Browder *is* having been decided, the Communist bestows upon him the complete measure of his contempt or adulation. When a new decision is made, a new Churchill or Hitler or Browder appears, and the present judgment is extinguished in its opposite.

Since the way his being is defined by the party alone determines whether a man be good or evil, the private harm or advantage he has brought to the Communist plays no part in the latter's judgment of him. Non-Communists or incomplete Communists have been shocked to find themselves assaulted in the speeches of Communists who have been their close friends and who have accepted favors from them. Such an attack is no sign of either ingratitude or hypocrisy. It is an act consistent with the metaphysical-moral structure of the Communist type, in which individual experience has no place.

Accustomed to moral ambiguities, conflicting emotions, hesitations, doubts, we are constantly astonished both by the automatic workings of the Communist moral mechanism and the immediate and total character of the emotional responses it produces. In this area it is we, not the Ukrainian peasant, who stand gaping before a 20th-century super-machine. A narrative in *The Dark Side of the Moon* presents the contrast between old-style feeling and the Communist-made model. It is told by a Polish girl who was deported to Russia during the Stalin-Hitler pact. In a settlement for delinquent girls she and other young Polish deportees had been threatened with death by Soviet fellow-inmates who resented their stubborn refusal to acknowledge that Poland "had ceased to exist." All this was suddenly changed when, after having been attacked, the USSR signed the Polish-Soviet

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Agreement. A political director brought the girls the glad tidings. "He was smiling and joking [they now belong to the flock]. . . ." the narrative continues. "This news was so unexpected that we were quite stunned. A thousand thoughts crossed my mind. The feeling of happiness was marred by a still stronger realization of the wrongs we had suffered. The Soviet girls cried *'Da zdrastfuiyet Polsha,'* 'Hail Poland!' We kept silent. From that moment we were heroines, and Poland became a nation with a great past and a great future."

The Polish girls were "stunned" into silence by their conflicting feelings, in which personal resentment played a big part. In contrast the Russians forgot instantaneously that they had once thought these young people had earned death by choosing for themselves the non-existence of Poland. The Poles had been reborn "with a great past and a great future" out of the new party line. As allies they deserved to be hailed for that heroism which pertained to all those united against the Nazis in the "Peoples' War."

THE power to erase and restore human status is given to the Communist by his historical clairvoyance. For the Communist the humanity of an individual lies in his historical role and this role is at all times wholly visible to the Communist. Accordingly, his judgment is that of history itself. It states who exists truly and who has but a sham existence, in that his extinction is already under way. It is as if the evolutionary process announced its preferences in moral terms. Lenin's reference to an opponent as a "political corpse" is more than an estimate of the value of his views. Like Trotsky's favorite description of people as "swept into the dust-bin of history," it implies that he has entered into non-being in everything but the physical sense. Actually killing such persons or removing them to Siberian camps simply assists time in its hygienic tasks. "The prisoner is to get it into his head as soon as possible," testifies a Polish Socialist in *The Dark Side of the Moon,* "that he is nothing but a thing and that nobody has any reason to be particular about the way he treats him." Prisoners of other systems have also been treated as "things." But with the Communist the separation of the individual from the human species is not a by-product of the callousness of police, military, or colonial administrations. It flows from his metaphysics of man and his relation to reality, and he justifies it by that metaphysics. For him a person conceived to be in a situation that deprives him of his past and future, like the defendants at the Moscow Trials, has literally lost his human identity. Vyshinsky's designation of Bukharin as "this damnable cross of a fox and a swine" and others as "beasts in human form," terminating in his demand that they "must be shot like dirty dogs," was not just hysterical vituperation. The animal images belong to a serious attempt to establish by analogy a definition of creatures who are another kind of animal than man.

Just as the "traitor" is made of a non-human substance, so also is the Communist leader. Regarding some human beings as nothings or sub-men always goes hand in hand with the adoration of other human beings as gods or supermen. Shub describes the surprise and distaste of Lenin at the adulation he received from his comrades; apparently, he could not comprehend what had made his creature into an idol-worshipper. Yet the explanation is not so difficult. Most historians of the Bolshevik movement point to the strain of Nechaevism in it. Nechaev's *Catechism of a Revolutionist* centered on the training of the revolutionist, through the systematic elimination of all sentiment, in utilizing human beings, including his fellow-fighters, as things. In his figure of Nechaev in *The Possessed,* Dostoevsky exposed the idolatrous core of this discipline. "Stavrogin, you are beautiful," cried Pyotr Stepanovitch, almost ecstatically. ". . . You are my idol! You injure no one, and everyone hates you. You treat every one as an equal, and yet every one is afraid of you. . . . To sacrifice life, your own or another's, is nothing to you. You are just the man that's needed. It's just such a man as you that I need. I know no one but you. You are the leader, you are the sun and I am your worm." The utter contempt for persons historically

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worthless or "dead," and the resolve to utilize them and then cast them aside, which Lenin instilled in the Bolshevik, could not fail to complete itself in the adoration of the leader—the figure who for him *is* the world proletariat and its promise of human brotherhood, salvation, and transcendence.

LENIN'S personality is without a trace of bad conscience—all his biographers concur in this. Of the Red terror he speaks with lightheartedness, almost with levity. History does not disturb itself with regrets*—nor does its personification, the Communist. "Don't you understand," Shub quotes Lenin as asking, "that if we do not shoot these few leaders we may be placed in a position where we would need to shoot ten thousand workers?" Even the latter "need" would reveal itself to him as beyond the possibility of doubt, as in the massacre of the Kronstadt sailors. Ruthlessness for him is an indispensable means for conserving human life. He does not resort to it on his own behalf or for his group or his nation—with him death is not in the employ of an ego, as with the Nazis. It serves the universal; it works for the good as such.

What deeper temptation can exist for the man awakened to the modern crisis than to accept this solution to the problem of action? He has seen increasingly large masses of people sentenced to enslavement and death. He has recognized that in his time the old issues of poverty and injustice, which earlier generations of humanitarians could approach with a certain softness and leisureliness, have given way to the issue of human survival itself. He knows that in such a situation action must be drastic, must be absolute. Yet this call to be "hard" torments his consciousness. He is wracked by the impermeable puzzle of how to preserve in the plunge into action the fragile contingencies of the humanly desirable—freedom, sociability, truthfulness. By becoming a Communist or even a fellow traveler he can dissolve this riddle and with it the mental anguish. Through the party he will inherit Lenin's "unshakeable conviction," he will know from moment to moment that his actions, no matter what they be, are necessary to rescue mankind from catastrophe. It will no longer be necessary to reconcile "hardness" with good will, for his violence will be benevolent *by definition*.*

But is not a doctrine of necessity in which benevolence is present as an abstraction the supreme formula of ruthlessness? Is not the inhumanity of "good men," of priests and zealots determined to control events for the sake of man's salvation, always more consistent, thorough, and fervent than that of the merely vicious? The ruthlessness of the Communist, composed of benevolence attenuated by "science," recalls once more the image of the surgeon. Knowing that his act is good in that it is necessary, he is morally obligated to make himself indifferent to the pain of the patient. The Communist has chosen humanity itself as his patient, and he has become a "true Bolshevik" when his inner peace is unmarred by the ills which his deeds bring to particular individuals.

THE question of Lenin's relation to the Communism of today continues to be a subject for debate. The discussion usually takes a rather abstract, not to say, theological, form. The writings of the master and details of his biography are combed for evidence establishing or refuting Stalin's claim to be his legitimate heir. In the following paragraphs I shall try to suggest why, if these doctrinal disputes remain inconclusive, perhaps the strongest link between the first Red occupant of the Kremlin and the second is the figure of the Communist.

Wolfe and Shub leave no doubt that the essence of Lenin's doctrine and practice was total control of the Socialist movement at the top. To this extent, Stalinism is indisputably a "logical development" of Leninism. So logical, in fact, that its main features were

* On this score the Leninist imagination seems entirely deluded. History constantly repeats itself, preserves outworn modes, returns to the scenes of its crimes, and behaves generally as if it were overcome with guilt and nostalgia.

* The reader will recall the recent speech of Thorez on the attitude of the French Communists in the event of an invasion of France by the Red Army: he stressed that the Red Army was nonaggressive "by definition."

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foreseen from the beginning. At the very founding congress of the All-Russian Social Democratic Labor party in 1903, many Socialists fully recognized that the type of centralized organization for which Lenin was desperately battling would inevitably be composed of members who, in the words of Martov, had "abdicated their right to think." The bitter debate on Article 1 of the party constitution brought from Axelrod the query: "Is not Lenin dreaming of the administrative subordination of an entire party to a few guardians of doctrine?" And shortly after the congress, Trotsky, who had sided with the opponents of Lenin on Article 1, wrote that Lenin's "egocentralism" would bring it about that "the organization of the Party takes the place of the Party itself; the Central Committee takes the place of the organization; and finally the dictator takes the place of the Central Committee. . . ."

All the quotations in the previous paragraph are from Wolfe's study, one of the great merits of which is its detailing of the struggle on this crucial issue of party democracy. Yet despite the evidence he presents that Leninism meant dictatorship, Wolfe is able to state: "Up to his seizure of power in 1917, Lenin always remained by conviction a democrat, however much his temperament and will and the organizational structure of his party may have conflicted with his democratic convictions." A democrat who felt, willed, and functioned as a dictator! If democratic convictions formed part of Lenin's doctrine, might not that doctrine have been something quite different from Stalinism? The issue cannot be decided by reference to the events of the revolution. Control by a man so contradictory in principle would inescapably produce phenomena in which one could discern, if perhaps but dimly, the suggestion of a Leninism to which that of Stalin bears only an outer resemblance. Thus Trotsky could point to the violent disagreements among members of the Bolshevik Central Committee even after 1917, to Lenin's yielding to majority decisions even on such vital issues as Brest-Litovsk. And Wolfe, too, testifies to Lenin's constant self-criticism and his willingness to admit errors openly, to his generosity in stretching out a hand to former political foes. These might have been but expedients to which Lenin was forced, as Stalin, too, has been forced into "democratic" moves. On the other hand, they might be glimpses of a democratic core in Leninism which under different circumstances might have revealed itself fully.

Plainly, there is no such core in Stalinism. And were Bolshevism like other political doctrines, Lenin, though responsible for his own autocracy and terrorism, might be little more responsible for its perpetuation and intensification by Stalin than, say (though the comparison is admittedly far-fetched), Lincoln's Republicanism is responsible for Hoover's. Programs, especially revolutionary programs, are changed, if not reversed, in the attempt to realize them. "People who imagined they had made a revolution," Wolfe quotes Engels as saying, "always saw the next day that they did not know what they had been doing, and that the revolution which they made was nothing like the one they wanted to make." If, as Trotsky claimed, the revolution was betrayed by Stalin, it might be equally true that Lenin was betrayed by the revolution. Along these lines, one could go on arguing forever as to what the "pure" doctrine of Leninism really was.

But the doctrine of Lenin is not like other political programs; it is even more than a *doctrine,* and is distinguished from Marxism itself in this respect. It belongs to that type of modern political movement to which one pledges not only his action but his very being. One could be a pre-World War I Marxist without making himself into a type. Bolshevism turned ideas into flesh—and flesh into an abstraction. Lenin invented the Communist *man.* This act of creation, whatever Lenin's doctrinal democracy, makes the Communist of today into a Leninist regardless of his party's political program, regardless of whether it is Right, Left, or "Centrist," regardless of whether it abandons revolutionary politics for collaboration or pushes revolution to the point of insane adventure.

Stalin saw in the existence of *the Communist* a fact above mere considerations of pro-

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gram and doctrine; it was here that the connection lay between Lenin and the movement. Having seized the leadership of the Bolshevik personnel, through laying hands on the organizational apparatus (a deed of proper Leninism), his strategy lay entirely in preserving his cohesion with it and reproducing or curtailing it to serve his purpose.* By this appropriation of the Leninist type, the Leninism of *any* program he proposed was guaranteed.

For his part, Trotsky strove to dislodge Stalin by doctrinal interpretations, in the center of which he placed Lenin's internationalism, his "democracy," and his capacity to admit error—all irrelevant to the character of the Bolshevik. Fundamentally, the former non-Bolshevik despised the Bolshevik type, in which he saw only the bureaucratic flunky who had "abdicated his right to think." He refused to acknowledge that Leninism had *embodied itself* once and for all in this very flunky, and that apart from him it had no reality. Yet to an extent Trotsky did acknowledge it, for more than to the non-Communists he continued to address himself to the minds of men whose nature is that their minds exist at the end of thought.

GRANTED that Lenin, for all the authoritarianism of his thought and action, did believe in democracy; granted that, for all his conviction of being right, he could acknowledge that the facts had declared him mistaken. Granting all this, the doctrine of Bolshevism is not, as Trotsky contended, changed thereby. It is to life itself, not to doctrine, that the recognition of others and the experience of fallibility belong. "That was the strength of Lenin as revolutionist," says Wolfe, "that, despite his passionate and dogmatic attachment to centralized organization and its rigid control of the masses, he could thrust both into the background whenever the foaming, tumbling, creative and uncontainable life of the million-headed mass in motion made their doctrinaire application dangerous to the Party's life." This living intuition of Lenin did not create the Bolshevik type. The Communist was the product of his external formulations, as rigorous as those of any scientist or disciplined artist. Whatever else there was in Lenin was thus doomed to die with him. Out of his tomb was bound to rise Leninism, the doctrine without the living man, from which the dialectical possibility of Bolshevik democracy and Bolshevik doubt had vanished forever. What appeared now was not a different doctrine but the creature of the doctrine, as distinct from its author.*

All differences between Lenin and the Communist of today refer back to this difference between an author and his creation. For instance, one who is an authority to himself, as Lenin was in those areas of theory and party work into which Marx and Engels had not penetrated, is never, no matter how authoritarian he be, comparable to the one who takes the dead for his authority. The living man convinced of his own rightness was never to that degree excluded from perception and communication as is his invention, the Man Who Knows. To restore "Lenin's Bolshevism" in the face of Lenin's creature, Trotsky would have had to do nothing less than bring Lenin himself back to life. For without Lenin, party democracy and the admission of error were to the Bolshevik but alien thoughts—as Stalin said, thoughts of a Menshevik.

* After writing the above, I came across the following description of the Chinese Communist party today; it indicates the degree to which Stalinism means the reproduction of the Leninist type regardless of program: "The bureaucracy for the entire country is developed in advance, in isolation, almost in laboratory fashion. . . . It deals with social groupings as a separate entity and by retention of its social independence determines the relationship between classes on the basis of the needs of its own rule. Thus Liu informs us that the policy for today is construction of a 'new capitalism' but that the party retains the liberty to move against this 'new capitalism' and its economic classes when it decides the time has come for 'socialism.' It is the party—or more accurately, the state-party-army—which is the bearer of historic change, no matter in whose name it acts at the moment." (*The New International*, February 1949.)

* Georges Sorel in his *Reflections on Violence* quotes Bergson's observation that "the master insofar as he formulates, develops, translates into abstract ideas what he brings is already in a way his own disciple." He is not identical with the disciple, but he does resemble him by way of the doctrine.

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THE ISRAELIS LEARN TO GOVERN THEMSELVES

Politics and Politicians in the New State

HAL LEHRMAN

TEL AVIV

IN a moving-picture theater called Kessem ("Magic"), where once Tom Mix, Gene Autry, and other quickshooting emissaries from the Wild West instructed the younger cowpunchers of Tel Aviv in the art of beating the rustlers to the draw, the Parliament of Israel is in session. Where once gimlet-eyed William S. Hart stalked across the wall, a patriarchal portrait of Theodor Herzl now presides over the deliberations of Zion. The hall has been transformed into a symphony of soft tone and quiet line. The Great Seal of Israel, a Menorah flanked by olive branches, adorns the raised tribune. A majestic, pearl-gray curtain sweeps down as a pleated backdrop behind the desks of the speaker and parliamentary officials, while overhead a procession of twelve stately shields, representing the months of the Hebrew year, marches across the cream-colored ceiling. Below, on four tiers of sleek leather benches grouped on mounting levels, and in a horseshoe design around the government table, are massed the one hundred and twenty members of the Knesset, first Assembly of Israel in nearly two millennia. Today this chamber is as handsome and dignified as that of any congress or parliament throughout the world.

Next door stands the former Hotel San Remo, remodeled to match the functional style of the Knesset and connected with it to form a single structure. Upstairs, meeting rooms are reserved for parliamentary groups, but much of the essential negotiation is transacted in a ground-floor self-service cafe, where members, their associates, and the press may enjoy the best salami and pickled herring in the Middle East. Contrary to Biblical promise, this is a land not of milk and honey but of tea and lemon. Lying in wait on the Mediterranean promenade outside are bands of Tel Aviv small fry, who descend with loud cries and autograph books on anyone—even the blue-uniformed, gold-buttoned ushers and the furtive journalists—emerging from the Knesset courtyard. Tel Aviv's bright-eyed little boys and girls, too young to have fought for the state and still too young to help build it, feel they must have a tangible memento of these epochal times, a signature of some Patrick Henry or Judas Maccabeus with which they can garnish the heroic tale for their grandchildren. Instinctively, they sense that every moment now is history.

The small fry are right. This is a vibrant and unforgettable hour to be in Israel. It is also an instructive hour. This is the time when the institutions of the future state, now groping in their infancy, are reaching toward shape and form. What is done today in Parliament, Cabinet, courts, police, civil service, and other organs of government is determining the maturity of tomorrow. It is too early to read the future clear and plain. But enough is evident for a partial assessment of tendencies, and it is certainly time for a brief preliminary report on some of Israel's developing institutions in this first year of freedom.

NOT having leisure to consult the voters while armed Arabs were pouring across

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THIS analysis of the emerging pattern of Israel's political institutions is the second of three articles which HAL LEHRMAN is writing for this magazine from Tel Aviv. The first, "The Economic Test Facing Israel," appeared in the June issue. Mr. Lehrman's book *Russia's Europe* was published last year, and he has been overseas since last November working on a new book on the role of the United States in reviving postwar Europe.

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the boundaries a year ago last May, the Provisional Government scraped together a temporary Parliament from the membership of two delegations previously elected by Palestine Jewry. One was the "Elected Council" (Vaad Leumi) which had managed Jewish community affairs under the mandate; the other was the group chosen to represent Palestine in the World Zionist Congress. This miniature "State Council," reinforced by spokesmen of parties which had not been in the above-mentioned bodies, served as Parliament by emergency government decree for nine months. It had the double purpose of preparing the constitutional elections and ratifying government acts *post facto*. Enjoying no legislative power, it nevertheless set up much procedural precedent, which the Knesset has been modifying with great caution, as if the tradition were centuries instead of months old.

The Knesset itself was the product of regular elections this January. Of 506,567 persons eligible, 440,080 voted and only 5,479 ballots were spoiled—a remarkable demonstration of political earnestness and literacy. The Knesset's first meetings were held in February in Jerusalem, on the top floor of the Jewish Agency, where Chaim Weizmann was elected President of the Republic, a speaker and two deputy speakers were chosen from the three largest parties, and a "Transitional Law" defining procedure for creation of a Cabinet was enacted. There followed three weeks of horse-trading and swapping of ministerial portfolios among the four groups in the majority bloc. Then David Ben Gurion presented his Cabinet and its program to the reconvened Knesset in Tel Aviv in March, and Israel's first constitutional government was duly sworn in.

Inevitably, the new Parliament was Continental in spirit and atmosphere, thanks to the system of multiple parties (twelve of them) imposed by the European origins of practically all of Israel's major politicians. One characteristic modification of the European formula arose from the chronic unwillingness of Jewish parties to be labeled anything except liberal or leftist. In Jerusalem Menachem Beigin's Herut ("Freedom") party, legal version of the fiery nationalist Irgun Zvai Leumi, objected as a body to being seated on the extreme right wing of the House. The "Herutniks" established squatter's rights directly behind the Marxist Mapam, a proximity which sparked warm exchanges throughout the solemn proceedings. This clash was avoided in Tel Aviv by ingenious invention of a left-to-right seating plan based on party strength. It places Ben Gurion's moderately socialist Mapai on the extreme left, Herut just right of center next to the peaceful religious bloc. Nathan Friedman-Yellin, who was let out of jail by general amnesty after his election, is the lone deputy of that intense band of devotees once known as the Stern Gang. He sits all by himself—on the far right.

OTHERWISE, the Knesset has been taking shape as a combination of British and Continental devices, mainly French, with Jewish refinements. Bills get three readings (British style), and are studied by one of nine commissions (French style). A cardinal point established in the first months of the Knesset's existence is that the government, and not Parliament, has the big say in deciding what legislation is to be presented. Sovereignty resides in the Knesset, but, arguing that government responsibility in this formative period of reconstruction requires unity of leadership, Ben Gurion has been successfully fighting for the principle that it is up to the government to initiate legislation and up to the Knesset to accept or reject it. Nor have the commissions, as in some parliaments, made good a claim to act as supervisory inspectors over the work of ministries and bureaus. A commission, for the moment, reviews proposed legislation in its field and may suggest revisions, but it is the government which accepts the amendment, not the commission which imposes it. On the whole, parliamentary controls over the executive are still nebulous, particularly since Ben Gurion's "Mapainiks" hold the strategic positions. There is, furthermore, a tendency to concentrate the effective discus-

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sion of bills in the commissions, where all parties are proportionately represented, rather then in Parliament itself. By the time any bill returns to the Knesset for final debate and vote, its content and its fate are pretty well determined.

All legislation, however, gets its first and then its last airing in the plenary Knesset, and Parliament has yielded no tittle of the jealous right to speak its mind. The earlier State Council, by a revolution unparalleled in Jewish annals since Bar Kochba, did agree to a general five-minute limit on orators. But when the Knesset first convened in Jerusalem, the wells of eloquence poured over. The rhetoric has been turgid ever since. The Jews having waited two thousand years to speak, their elected representatives seem unwilling to wait one minute longer. Half the House may be out in the café for strudel, but there is always some one in the tribune, explaining his vote, getting his little paragraph in the papers. Unfamiliar with his own strength as magnified by the public-address system, he frequently performs full-blast; on one occasion, when the presiding speaker pleaded for a little less yelling, the indignant member deafened the hall by roaring into the microphone: "Who's yelling?"

In the main, however, both the chair, usually occupied by Speaker Josef Sprinzak, and the Knesset at large are steadily developing their efficiency and decorum. By a shrewd and novel rule of procedure, the House decides exactly how much debate any particular bill will have, and then each party gets its quota of time; a debater who exceeds his allotment does so at the expense of his own party. Orators still lard their arguments with literary quotations and windy digressions; they are inclined to temporize with the little electric light which blinks on the rostrum when time is up; members shout derisive remarks or stage impromptu debates from the floor; the chair argues and pleads and pounds the gavel. But everybody is learning. Acquisition of disciplined finesse takes time. As Sprinzak has said: "Was my father a speaker of a Knesset?"

I have seen older parliaments with less dignity. I have also seen parliaments where discipline is absolute, where bills revising the whole structure and history of a state are introduced, debated, and acclaimed, without a dissenting voice, in the space of half an hour. There is no such present danger in the Knesset. One might wish, however, for a little more flexibility within party ranks. Except for slight variations on minor issues, each party has been voting solidly and by obvious pre-arrangement. Though the same miraculous unanimity often occurs in Western parliaments, and there is the added excuse here of the national emergency, this does not necessarily make the practice good. Too much agreement can be just as disastrous to progress as too little.

THEY say of Ben Gurion that he will refuse the crown of Israel only because he objects to being called David II. The little white-haired dynamo with the bald spot on top has been powering the country with his own inexhaustible energy. To his personal direction of the war is generally given the credit for the victory. Now that he has shifted over to command of the economic crisis, he will get the credit if that battle is won, too. But the penalty for this is over-centralization, more work than any one man can do, and a chronic bottleneck farther down along the line. Almost the same is true of Finance Minister Eliezer Kaplan and, to a lesser degree, of nearly all the other Cabinet members.

Gone are the good old Jewish Agency days when even a reporter, to say nothing of a heavy contributor to the UJA, could sit down with any high official for a long heart-to-heart talk. Today the official is a member of the government of Israel. He dashes about in a powerful limousine, the blue and white pennon of Zion flapping, an armed bodyguard at the wheel. His time is as severely rationed as butter. It is harder to get an interview with him than with the Pope, as this writer can testify from personal experience with the Pope. More important, the ministers are falling behind because they

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are trying to do too much. They spend interminable hours, for instance, at the government table in the Knesset, instead of having parliamentary undersecretaries to represent them. They also take personal part in the spun-out discussions of the various Knesset commissions. Meanwhile the problems of administration pile up. I have heard subordinates inside certain departments privately expressing doubt whether their chiefs any longer have time for organized work, let alone organized thinking. It may all be due to a shortage of competent personnel. But, whatever the cause, a more generous division of ministerial labor ought to be close to the top on the list of urgent reforms in Israel.

"B. G.," as the Premier is affectionately called, runs his Cabinet like a schoolmaster. When the government's Four-Year Development and Absorption Plan was ready, he had it printed up as a booklet which each minister was to carry around in his pocket, and as a large poster which each minister was to tack on his wall or under the glass top of his desk. "B.G." also invited each minister to look at the Plan every morning and ask himself what he had already done and what he proposed to do that day to bring it closer to realization.

In theory, each minister enjoys wide discretionary rights, the powers of the mandate's High Commissioner having been generally divided up among the different ministers and officially bestowed upon them by publication in the Provisional Government's *Official Gazette* when the High Commissioner disappeared with the British troops. Any decision of a minister—including emergency regulations good for three months unless the Knesset annuls them—becomes valid as soon as it appears in the *Gazette* (now called *Records*). The catch is that copy for the *Records,* on its way to publication, goes through the Premier's office, where it can be "detained."

In practice, however, this does not seem yet to have happened, because no minister would think of taking any major action before consulting the Premier, or all his colleagues in plenary session, which normally takes place once a week. "B.G." controls the agenda of these meetings, and may also call irregular meetings. But it must be said that he has submitted his own major projects to the agenda, too. Furthermore, Cabinet decisions are made by a simple majority, in which the Premier casts only one vote like everyone else. Mapai, his party, holds nine of the sixteen portfolios, of course. Nevertheless, "B.G." has been outvoted on occasion, even on a matter which affected the shape of the frontiers. Once taken, a decision becomes the responsibility of every minister insofar as he may not vote against it in the Knesset. He may express his personal opinion of it in the Knesset only if a majority of the Cabinet specifically gives him this privilege. He may abstain from voting, however—unless a Cabinet majority decides he may not.

THESE internal regulations are mainly borrowed from French and Swiss cabinet procedure. But the basic law now governing Israel is almost entirely on loan from the British. When the mandate boarded ship and departed, the Israeli Provisional Government took over intact the corpus of law that the British left behind—except for the restrictions on immigration and land transfer. Such inheritance is a normal emergency procedure of successor states. It may be a long time before Israel, antique nation of the Law, produces a fundamental law and a constitution of its own.

Several draft constitutions exist, the most publicized one being that of Dr. Leo Kohn, Israeli Foreign Ministry political advisor who is an expert on, of all things, the constitution of the Irish Free State. But the odds are that discussion and adoption will be indefinitely postponed. The question of the Knesset's own status—whether it is merely a constituent assembly or a full-term parliament—is also being left tacitly in abeyance.

Why the delay? Because Ben Gurion and his coalition fear a disruptive debate on the fundamental structure of the state while Israel still faces the immediately crucial

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problems of a hostile Arab world, immigrant absorption, and economic recovery. Pro-government atheists and rabbis, for example, agree alike that it is better to have a minimum agreement now on *chupah, chazer,* and the relation of church and state, while Israel directs all its strength to the task of finding room for a million new citizens, than to rend the country apart by a *Kulturkampf.* The intention seems to be, therefore, to do as the British do, meeting each issue as it arises, muddling through from day to day instead of imposing a neat Constitution full-grown and confining on a rapidly expanding society. "That the British produced Ernest Bevin," says Ben Gurion, "doesn't mean everything else they do is bad."

WHILE government and Parliament concentrate on current business, the Yishuv which danced in the streets when the mandate fell goes on living under the dispensations of the mandate's law, which is an English and Turkish mixture. Criminal law, torts, and procedure are patterned after English common law, with colonial revisions. Corporation and commercial law rests on Britain's "Companies Act of 1929." (Last year England adopted a new act that improves upon the mandatory version; adoption of the modernized form in Israel has been avoided thus far because of its embarrassing political implications, but Israel may yet take it over.) The civil code is the old Turkish Mejelle, whose antiquity and rural flavor may be savored in its concern with such urgent matters as the sale of camels. Another anachronism is the Turkish land law, which prescribes different types of inheritance for urban and agricultural estates. Under it, most of the city of Tel Aviv, which was largely an undeveloped coastal strip in the days of Balfour, is still regarded as farm land. Of all the Turkish codes, only mortgage law is comparatively modern, dating from 1913 and patterned on French lines. A special institute in the Ministry of Justice is re-examining traditional Jewish law to determine the feasibility of creating a new set of legal codes infused with the Judaic spirit and yet relevant to the needs of a progressive modern society.

Trial by jury was unknown in mandated Palestine, nor were there elected judges, because of the obstacles to such Western luxuries in a non-homogeneous, mixed Arab-Jewish population. Although these difficulties still exist, if to a lesser degree, a reform is envisaged for the vague future. Meanwhile, verdicts are still exclusively rendered by judges nominated by the state to every tribunal, beginning with the magistrates' courts for low crimes, misdemeanors, and petty civil suits, through the district courts of appeal, to the Supreme Court in Jerusalem, whose "Five Old Men" sit in final judgment on appeals or complaints and writs against public officials.

The power of the Jerusalem tribunal to nullify "unconstitutional" legislation, in the manner of the American Supreme Court, has not been delineated, especially since there is no Constitution, but it already has upset administrative decisions of the state. In each instance, the High Court has defended the rights of the individual against arbitrary government action—as in the case of an Arab notable in Jaffa who was deprived of some of his rights as a citizen while under military arrest, or in the case of police personnel who were dismissed for having allegedly been overly receptive to bribes during the mandatory regime. In the latter case, a strong though non-legal influence on the court's decision was the fact that the policemen had been discharged just before Passover. This, the judges evidently thought —as did most of the population—was inhuman and outrageous.

The government itself has also succumbed at times to a Jewish bias toward mercy and *mitzvahs.* After first refusing a visa to the agile Sidney Stanley, the Immigration Ministry announced that since Stanley was now out of England and "cut off from his family and home . . . on the eve of Passover, the traditional festival of freedom," the government would permit him in Israel as "an act of grace and mercy." It will also be remembered that the opening of the Knesset

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was magnanimously marked by a sweeping amnesty for prisoners, political and criminal—a *mitzvah* which caused no small distress to the police, who quickly got most of the felons behind bars again for returning to their lives of crime within twenty-four hours after liberation.

THE police have encountered more difficult problems than nabbing amnestied burglars and pickpockets. Their toughest assignment has been to persuade the people of Israel to like and trust them. Under the mandate, policemen of British origin were habitually insolent and frequently brutal, behaving in colonial style toward the "natives." Mandatory policemen of Jewish origin were naturally less obnoxious, but they too were unpopular because of their liking for *baksheesh*. It was the British administration's deliberate policy to hold its Jewish civil servants to starvation wages. Most of the police took bribes hand over fist with the partial justification of being otherwise unable to keep alive. The Israeli police inherited a legacy of inbred public suspicion and antagonism.

The job of breaking this down was complicated by the fact that the new police are dressed exactly like the old. On departing, the British had taken care to destroy, or give away to the Arabs, all the equipment they were unable to take with them. But three months later, lo and behold, a British vessel suddenly turned up in Israeli waters and unloaded on the beach a vast quantity of supplies that the administration had ordered two years earlier. It seems that the supply agency, not having received the circular announcing the mandatory power's evacuation of Palestine, but having received payment, stoutly fulfilled its part of the bargain by making full delivery with laudable British thoroughness. The shipment included some ten thousand police uniforms, boots, caps, and miscellaneous items. As a result there blossomed on the streets and highways of free Israel a multitude of constables wearing Jewish faces and speaking Hebrew but dressed in the blue image of the hated Palestine police. It has taken the public a long time to get used to the amazing sight.

But they have, and have even learned to forget old grudges. This miracle was partly achieved by a well-organized propaganda campaign in which the schools and the press helped. Even more effective was the behavior of the policemen. On orders from upstairs they were, and remain, probably the most polite and mild-mannered constables in the history of law. They were quite capable of flexing their muscles, but only as a last resort. Instead of tickets they spoke softly, gave gentle reprimands to traffic violators, later handed out summonses with embarrassed apologies. I have seen three Tel Aviv constables actually pleading with two bloodied street-brawlers to be good fellows and go home. No people on earth could resist such blandishments. Today the police of Israel have wiped out all identification between themselves and their predecessors.

It is also a pleasure to report that Israeli citizens do not have police identity cards, a device customary in too many European countries. The public has plenty of identity cards, it is true—for rations, for voting, for other civic processes—but no card which must be stamped, renewed at regular intervals, and fished out on demand to prove that one is innocent of sedition and authorized to be in the country. As a matter of fact, Israelis do not yet have any formal nationality, since a nationality law has still to be promulgated. For purposes of Israel's first election last January, the right to vote was unreservedly given to every legally competent adult who had been in the country when a census was taken the previous November 8.

Thus far the technical question of nationality has hardly arisen except in cases of passports and exit visas for travel. (Appropriately, the first legal grant of Israeli citizenship was made to President Weizmann.) In the main, exit visas have been restricted until now to government officials, of whom, by the way, an extraordinary number for such a small country seem to be traveling abroad. The dry remark attributed to Weizmann (but probably wrongly)—"Join the

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Jewish Agency and see the world"—still holds good, with amendments. Ordinary Israelis who apply for exit visas must prove that their journey is in the public interest or justified on strong compassionate grounds. Even then, the applicant may not get his visa—sometimes for the simple reason that the particular official in charge does not feel like giving it to him.

Now a free country at war customarily reduces foreign travel by its citizens to a minimum. Furthermore, a country that suffers from a shortage of foreign currency usually economizes by discouraging its citizens from taking money abroad. But it is also true that, once a formal decision regulates the conditions for the issuance of a visa and a citizen fulfills those conditions, application of the decision ought not to be left to the uncontrolled discretion of some self-important official. Yet this happens to be so in more than one case. Similar abuse of power occurs in other ministries and agencies of the new government. All this brings up the disturbing question of the Israeli civil service, its complexion, its behavior—a subject that needs closer review here.

On the Eastern outskirts of Tel Aviv sits the governmental compound known as Ha'Kirya ("The City"). Once it was called Sarona, and served a German Christian colony from the time of the Kaiser's Reich until World War II. The British then moved in and interned its residents as enemy aliens. Later the area was purchased by the Tel Aviv municipality and the Jewish National Fund. Sarona's Germanic settlers, naturally, are long departed. (Workmen on the building that is eventually to become the Foreign Ministry unearthed a stock of Nazi pamphlets and literature in the basement, which afforded the occasion for a festive "burning of the books" in reverse.) The one-hundred-acre Kirya, its streets newly paved and named by the letters of the alphabet, is now the heart and center of Israel's budding civil service.

One of the proudest possessions of Zeev Sharef, the government's General Secretary, is a bookcase crammed with files of drafts and plans for the various Israeli ministries written long in advance of Israel's freedom. Preparations to take over started in October 1947, when the Jewish Agency—a whole month before partition was voted at Lake Success—decided that the British really meant to get out. By February a complete blueprint of government was ready. Even before the mandate ended, the Israeli administration had begun functioning.

The new ministries were straight transformations of the bureaus of previously existing institutions. Thus, the Political Department of the Agency became the Foreign Ministry; the Social Welfare Department of the Vaad Leumi, executive body of the Palestine Jewish community, became the Ministry of Social Welfare; the Ministry of Health was pieced together from the Vaad Leumi and the mandate government. Every department had its budget planned on paper for the first year. Even the ex-Nazi villas at the Kirya were already allocated to the various ministries. Some of the high officials knew ahead of time which office in which house was awaiting them, and where the furniture stood ready for delivery.

Training for the great day had been going on quietly and anonymously for years. Just as Haganah and the Jewish Brigade had been preparing to become the core of the Israeli army some day, so many men at many obscure posts had been grooming themselves to become the core of the Israeli administration. I remember one of them who came to Turkey in 1943 with credentials as a foreign correspondent from the *Yoman Gaathon*—the mimeographed newspaper tacked on the wall of his kibbutz. This "reporter's" real job was to buy ships and smuggle refugees out of the Nazi-occupied Balkans. Today he is the Israeli Minister to Czechoslovakia and Hungary. Young Walter Eytan, now Director-General of the Foreign Ministry, ran an informal school for diplomats in Jerusalem during the mandate. The present Israeli Consul General in Prague was a leader of the Jewish underground in wartime Hungary. The director of Lydda Airport is the

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Austrian ex-pilot who trained the first fliers of Haganah. Officials moved over from the Jewish Agency, the Histadrut labor federation, the Anglo-Palestine and other banks, and even from the Palestine administration—including several non-Jewish British technicians who, having behaved decently during the mandate and studied their Hebrew, have signed new contracts and settled down to long-term residence in Israel. There also were volunteers in the manner of our "dollar-a-year men," putting aside private interest for a time in order to contribute their abilities to the launching of the state. Finally, many more desks being available than professional administrators to fill them, a lot of jobs were parceled out more or less on the basis of party affiliation and personal friendship.

In the first fine, careless rapture of independence, this heterogeneous personnel threw itself into its work with considerable enthusiasm, devotion, and self-sacrifice. Everybody felt the eye of history upon him, and responded energetically to the challenge of the inspired moment. When the youth of Palmach, Haganah, and the far-flung settlements were going out to battle with puny Sten guns and home-made hand grenades, who could think of personal gain and private ambition? Hours were long, work endless, payment meager, but officials high and low gave the best that was in them.

This spirit of self-sacrifice seems now to be petering out. Civil servants are adjusting themselves to the reduced tempo and lesser inspiration of quieter times. There is nothing unnatural about this; it was foreseeable and even inevitable. However, outside observers are not therefore obliged to ignore abundant evidence that the reaction is going too far, that the administration of this young and promising state these past few months has been slipping fast into faults and frailties which older bureaucracies have taken centuries to cultivate.

With due allowance for numerous high-minded exceptions, the tendency is setting in among officials to regard one's post as a private preserve rather than a public service. For certain minor places, rudimentary examinations are now beginning to be offered, but a system of standards for civil service appointments does not yet exist and most positions are still being filled by invitation, not by competition. In most cases, the invitation is political. Many of the ministries are heavily loaded with party comrades of the particular minister who held the portfolio when the department was being formed. In Social Welfare, bailiwick of the right-wing religious Agudath, almost every new appointee sports a *yamulka*. Labor has been packed with "Mapamniks" because that left-wing, pro-Soviet party controlled this ministry in the days of the Provisional Government. Trade and Industry has a large complement of General Zionists, and a half-dozen key ministries teem with stalwarts of Mapai, the dominant party in the present coalition. Especially where the party of the rank and file in a ministry is still the party of its chief, the inclination is to enjoy the benefits of a closed corporation or a private club. Power breeds arrogance, even in Israel. The customer on the other side of the rail—the ordinary, undistinguished, tax-paying civilian—is a suppliant who must be cleared out of the room somehow, not a client entitled to service.

The general incivility of the civil service has recently provoked a formal circular to all hands which reads in part: "Officials receiving the public should conduct business quietly and politely. They would do well to offer the visitor a seat before beginning conversation. If an application cannot be complied with, the fact should be stated, and at the same time the applicant should be guided as to what he must do next. . . ." Unfortunately, this praiseworthy advice passes over in silence a matter that is even more important to the civilian than routine courtesy: the defense of his rights against arbitrary decisions.

Such guarantees grow increasingly necessary as the functions of the administration expand. The new "austerity" controls, for one thing, will inexorably create a spider's

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web of extra red tape, in the middle of which a regiment of officials will hand down edicts based on their own particular interpretations of the very complex law. They have the pleasant prospect of being able to abuse their power pretty widely before they run afoul of higher authority. In some spheres, they have no cause to feel that higher authority will ever interfere with them at all.

Take the case of the recent "compulsory loans," for instance. Businessmen were arbitrarily tapped for specific contributions, with the unspoken understanding that if they failed to supply the cash or a good reason for not supplying the cash, they might trip over sudden obstacles later when applying for import licenses, bank credits, foreign exchange allocations, and other official services to which normally they would be entitled without discrimination. Again, instead of receiving compensation, owners of houses are being required to repair, at their own expense and to an amount prescribed by an official agency, the damage done to their property by military action of the enemy—*and* the Israeli forces.

Now this is not the place to examine the arguments that a compulsory loan is justified because the nation was giving its blood while businessmen were making profits, or that compulsory building-repair is justified because of the housing shortage. Nor is there room here to examine the implications of legislation which tends increasingly to put official hands into the middle-class private purse. We are examining the institutions that govern Israel, not the ideology that governs the regime. It need only be said that measures which require a big control apparatus for their enforcement open a vast field for haphazard rulings and carefree action by officials who largely lack competent training and a mature tradition of public service.

MANY underprivileged citizens are complaining, however, that another kind of tradition does in fact already exist. This might be described as a re-writing of Sam Gompers: "Let us reward those we know and punish those we don't know." The local one-word version of this, imported from Eastern Europe, is *"protektzia."* It is the word on everybody's lips, as virulent as an eleventh Egyptian plague. It is otherwise known as "Vitamin P"—and every Israeli, except those with comfortable jobs or obliging friends in the government, will tell you it is one vitamin of which this country is suffering a strong over-dose.

"Protektzia" is for the new Israel what *baksheesh* was for the old Palestine. Way back in the misty days of the mandate, you could get everything for money and nothing without it. From driver's license to government appointment, from lowly clerk to lordly official, everything and pretty nearly everybody had his price. This omnipotent *baksheesh,* with subtle British colonial modifications in Palestine, is a rite still piously observed in the rest of the Middle East and in large parts of the Balkans. In Israel, *baksheesh* has virtually ceased to exist. It is considered most unpatriotic, and anti-social. But *"protektzia"* has triumphantly taken its place.

"Protektzia" does not involve anything so vulgar as money. It involves influence. It requires that the applicant for an official job, or an official favor, or even for a normal official service, should know somebody in a position to do him good. You need to have a friend, or a friend of a friend, someone with whom you went to school, or knew in Haganah, or someone in Mapai or Mizrachi or whatever party organization happens to be running the bureau that gives out the thing you want. With that connection you are all set—without it, no matter how good your claim, you wait, you rush around in circles, and you may end exhausted and unrequited. Many unfortunates who minded their own business all their lives and stayed out of politics now look back with poignant longing to the *baksheesh* era. At least, they say, money was a thing you could collect and hand over, but friends in strategic places are things you either have or don't have, and if you don't have them you're through.

"Protektzia" is indeed a wonderful thing.

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I know one hard-working local journalist who has been living with his wife and child in his in-laws' small flat because of the housing shortage. Also in the flat are his sister and several of his wife's assorted relatives. Now my friend, by glorious accident, happens to have some shares in a certain apartment house. Recently a tenant in that house prepared to move out. Under the law, an owner without lodging of his own has first claim on any vacant part of his rented property. My friend happily prepared to move in.

But he found an official of the Prime Ministry ahead of him. (This deft operation is called "requisition.") It seems that the official already had a two-room apartment, but for his wife—who, incidentally, was secretary to a Cabinet member—it wasn't big enough. . . . My friend's only recourse now is to wend his apoplectic way to Jerusalem and lay his burden before the High Court. When last seen, he was disappearing in the direction of the Holy City.

The truth is that the bureaucracy of Israel suffers from a curiously split personality. Its Western ideas are acquired; its Eastern habits are innate. The two are in constant clash. Officials who come from Western Europe, Britain, or America are few and completely outnumbered. Worse, those who come from Central and Eastern Europe or are Palestine-born actually believe they are Western-minded. Some of them certainly are. But a good many others are not. What they have learned are the slogans of the West, the clichés of democracy, not its meaning. The outcome of this undecided struggle between form and substance will write itself large in the structure and spirit of the future Israel.

It is never agreeable to pick flaws in the things we love, and it is frequently thankless. One comes to Israel with eagerness and enthusiasm. One expects to find inadequacies and imperfections. Perfection does not exist anywhere else. Why should it exist in Israel? But what should a reporter do about the faults that do exist? I think he should do his job—and report them. There are faults that can't be helped because they are due to conditions and pressures beyond control. These should be reported and explained so that the distant reader will understand them and sympathize with the men who have to deal with them. And there are other faults that arise not out of circumstances but out of men and their errors and their weaknesses. I think these should be reported too. If the first reporter doesn't, the second one will, perhaps with more venom and less charity. When the truth finally comes out, as it must, those who have been misinformed will not be grateful to the purveyors of fables.

There is another reason for telling the whole truth cleanly. Israel is new. Israel is malleable, like a little child with soft and delicate bones. The evils of older states are the accretion of age, the slow hardening of youthful tendencies into ancient ritual. There is still time in Israel. But in Israel the bad, like the good, is aging quickly. The men who are supervising its growth have brought with them the habits and the sophistications of the societies from which they came. They are in a hurry because there is so much to do. And everything they do creates a precedent, lays down a rule for tomorrow. If suggestions, questions, and perhaps even improvements are in order, the time is today.

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THE INTELLECTUALS AND THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

The Hope for Our Heritage in America

ELLIOT E. COHEN

THE word "culture" is again being heard in the American Jewish community—after a decade's absence. To be sure, it is a bit early to announce a renascence. But it indicates something when a thousand community delegates turn up to overcrowd a convention hall (when only one hundred and fifty were expected), to hear an informal discussion on the future of American Jewish culture by five "intellectuals," none of them a celebrity: this happened at that soberest and most practical of Jewish assemblies, that of the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds in Philadelphia early this year. Indeed, during the past winter and spring there have been few national conferences, of whatever organization or tendency, that have not featured a "cultural discussion"; and the air is full of schemes and proposals reflecting the reawakened cultural interest.

Admittedly, most of this is smoke generated under forced draft from the same old rusty publicity stoves. But there is fire beneath; and nothing better attests the genuineness of this new impulse than the community's excited interest in the younger Jewish intellectuals, and in their rumored revived concern with "things Jewish."

This is something new, this focus on the culture-maker and culture-bearer himself, rather than on institutions or ideologies, or even "cultural products." The custom has been to think solely of what we, the community elders and our institutions, need and demand of the intellectuals. It has seldom occurred to us to consider what they might need and demand of us—and of life. Actually, this topsy-turvy approach is mere common sense. For obviously, if we are interested in the future of the Jewish heritage in America, that future depends primarily on them, and only secondarily on us. No bees, no honey.

And, of course, there is another reason why (if we are wise) we need to keep close to our intellectuals. Though it has been said a thousand times, it is still true: they are the vanguard of the generations ahead; in their feelings and their thinking they barometrically register the needs and demands of our own children and grandchildren. And they can be more immediately useful, too: some of us remember that in the late 20's and early 30's the young writers seethed with anxious concern over the menace of Hitler, while the statesmen and the community leaders remained calmly unaware.

From the precarious vantage point of an editor's chair, I shall try here to sketch a rough portrait of the Jewish "culture-maker" of today, what he is like, what he is thinking about himself as an artist and intellectual, and what, perhaps, he is thinking about himself as a Jew and in relation to Judaism and the Jewish community.

II

PERSONALLY, I find it most fruitful to approach the Jewish intellectual of the late 1940's by comparing him with his older brother (or, in some cases, older self) of the 20's. The 20's was a time, as many of us remember, that called itself the age of disillusionment—the fashionable stereotype was that the sensitive young American had had

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his ideals irretrievably shattered by the realities of the First World War, and lived in a state of acute disintegration of mind and will and confidence. Of course, just the opposite was true. This was an era, in the mind and the arts, of almost fantastic exuberance, self-assertiveness, and wildly luxuriant energy—it was a time when the intellectuals came surging in, full of ambition, from all the provinces of America to Chicago, New York, Paris, and Europe generally. It was the time of H. L. Mencken, Eugene O'Neill, Sinclair Lewis, Theodore Dreiser, Sherwood Anderson, Paul Rosenfeld, and Ernest Hemingway. It was a period of exploration and discovery, in which young people tried voraciously to put themselves in contact with all possibilities of experience and all regions of America. There was overwhelming enthusiasm, a sense of the sheer value of experience as experience, and of art as art, and along with it the ambition not merely to participate in every gratification and sorrow the world had to offer, but to reshape the world, too. There was literature and there was social reform; there was a sense of America coming of age.

The Jewish intellectual of that time felt himself in the forefront of this whole movement. I was managing editor of a Jewish magazine in those days, and as I think back to the personalities of the 20's I realize how high their ambitions were and how confident they were of their achievement. Humorously, they said of each other—and those days were full of satire and irony and a sense of the ridiculous—that they suffered from the Leonardo da Vinci complex, and certainly each lieutenant-intellectual quite literally believed that he carried in his knapsack the baton of a cultural Napoleon. At the same time, for all the airs they gave themselves as cultural leaders, they felt themselves very close to and very responsible to people—all the various classes and occupations and breeds of Americans. It was a bumptious generation, but at the same time it felt itself warmly and intimately involved with the experience and the aspirations of other human beings in all their specific variety.

Parenthetically, this creative surge did not stop with 1929 and the onset of the depression. Indeed, with the depression, one could almost say it went into higher gear. Many of the men and women of that generation became the banner-bearers of radical reform and social regeneration. They threw themselves heart and soul into building a new society overnight; and their revolutionary aspirations, expressed both in New Deal and radical politics, had their parallel in the literary, artistic, and critical fields. With economic and social determinism as the key to the whole field of culture, the thinkers and critics of the time set out to rewrite all the books of the ages, so that they would more clearly reflect social "truth" and advance social change and reconstruction.

Now, how did the Jewish intellectual of that generation think of himself as a Jew? That same surge of curiosity, of desire for experience, flooded into this area, too. The problem of returning to Jewishness or rejecting it was very much on the order of the day. There was an effort to come closer to the Jewish heritage and to the Jewish people. Zionism in those days had strong cultural interests and was a lively intellectual leaven. Though few became Zionists, many found much cultural nourishment there. As I remember them, Jewish intellectuals of that time had very little interest in the religious side of the Jewish heritage; it was a rationalist, or rather naturalist generation, to which religious issues seemed passé. They sought rather to come closer to the lives and interests of other Jews, and to enjoy a common cultural heritage. I remember an informal circle of almost fifty Jewish intellectuals and artists, which called itself the Samson Gideon Memorial Association, and which came together in the meeting rooms over a German beer garden on Irving Place or in various Italian restaurants. One evening we gave a Yiddish puppet show in Meyers Hotel in Hoboken. One recalls also a debate on Jewish nationalism between the late Shemarya Levin and a younger Sidney Hook, which was both as violent and as amicable as anything could be. I remember also that at least two editors of the *Menorah Journal* grew beards.

What were the relations between this generation and the organized Jewish community? Not particularly close or fruitful, one would have to say. The fact is, perhaps, that this generation was iconoclastic, over-weening, impatient, and demanding. They were not tender or tactful with sacred cows, and maybe irreverent to genuinely sacred vessels. By and

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large, the Jewish community showed itself nervous and offended. If it did not reject this generation wholesale, it certainly found little place for it. Years later one can see that very few of the talented of that generation remained in any intimate contact with the Jewish community and its work. On a personal basis, between one scholar and another or one intellectual and another, ties endured—but little more than that.

Perhaps it was because the community did not yet feel the need for the intellectuals' work. Certainly the means and institutional facilities for making use of their energies did not exist, except perhaps in one field—that of social welfare; here the intellectuals made some impress, though not too much. As for the rest, a few books were written, some fragmentary pieces of *belles lettres* and of scholarship produced, and a few personalities cast up on Jewish institutional shores. But the balance sheet, I think, would show that much high potential went to waste, and that, since some of us think this was a golden generation, a great opportunity was missed.

Perhaps a little more vision on the part of the communal elders, a little more understanding of the genuine interest and enthusiasm that lay under the surface of the sheer youthful contrariness and *chutzpah*—perhaps that might have made a difference. But it might be not only more tactful but truer to place the chief responsibility for the failure on those giant social and political forces that swept everything under in the 30's.

III

Now—rushing in again with rash generalizations—what of the Jewish intellectual of the late 1940's? He is, I think, what you would expect to find him if you remember that he is a cultural child of the Great Depression, of the defeat of the dreams of social reconstruction that followed it, of the great human cataclysm of World War II, and of the present period of that peace which is not peace. Culturally, he feels himself the survivor of a long series of routs and massacres. Insecurity is his portion, and doom and death are to him familiar neighbors. Read his descriptions of himself in literature or criticism or poetry—or see him in the flesh—and it is clear he thinks of himself as wary, unhopeful, isolated, and alienated. There is very little in him of that lust for life and experience, of the joy of living for its own sake, of a sense of wide horizons or worlds to conquer, or much of that early curiosity that drove his older brother expansively over the realms of knowledge. He seems to have little creative energy as such, and that little he hoards. He is not lavish with his emotions or his sympathies or his interest in people. Rather than ranging the whole country or the many continents, he is thrown back on himself. Sceptical of the large claims of political ideologies, he is neither a joiner nor a devotee. He has almost no humor, little wit, and a kind of self-absorbed solemnity. In his writing, he has little feeling or interest for grace, fine effects, or perhaps even for communication at all. In contrast to his prototype of the 20's, he is not likely to be a novelist, short-story writer, or, least of all, a dramatist. His turn of mind seems to be reflective and analytical, and, as you would expect, his talents are directed toward philosophy, psychology, literary criticism, the social sciences, and religion.

He still thinks of himself as a leader, but wryly, as without followers or even an audience. Yet one can see that he is addressing himself to one or another phase of a larger task—the retesting and revaluation of the intellectual and spiritual values of his own life and of the culture and society of which he is a part. You can picture the intellectual of this generation as picking up one by one the slogans, the words, the concepts that have represented the coinage of our cultural tradition, and biting each one sharply with his teeth. So many have proved to be counterfeit.

And in his new concern with religion, one should point out, the interest is not in emotional conversion or a search for solace, but in recapturing the deep intellectual values that represent man's honorable sense of himself as an individual human being, in a universe that has again become mysterious and in a society that has revealed itself as by no means automatically progressive, but infinitely capable of backsliding and threat. And, in this moral and spiritual research, he does not exempt himself: whether he turns to the traditional religious thinkers, or to the newer religious and ethical myth-makers of psychoanalysis, the core of his concern is to find the springs of his own decent, effective humanity.

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Call it trauma or insight, as pleases you, the core of the intellectual's concern seems to be the facts neither of depression nor war but his fright at something else—the menace of totalitarianism. And here too, it is not so much the massiveness and savagery of the totalitarian attack that obsesses him, but the revelation of the vulnerability and treasonableness of our own inner defenses, of so many of our own ideas, codes, and credos. He finds it impossible to think of fascism as a simple aberration of the German people, a sudden fever in the mind which raged epidemically and then passed away; nor can he be sure that the Soviet system today constitutes the sole totalitarian threat. He believes that the menace of both Nazism and Communism lies in their building of dehumanized collectivities. But, at the same time, he sees that we of the West spent prior decades building our own kinds of vast industrialized collectivities, in which sheer hugeness, and power, and abstract organizational needs were paramount; in which mechanisms came first and human objectives second; in which, at the behest of what Karl Polanyi has called "the market mentality," the human being was increasingly a statistic, an object, a thing.

Did we not ourselves—we of the West—cut man down to a size where he might fit more easily into the grand design of Nazism and Stalinism? We know what we think of their morals and their values—they are a human horror! But we cannot escape the question: what of our own? What pride can we take in only being "the lesser evil"? How deeply have we allowed ourselves to be infected by this century's accelerating acquiescence in the dehumanization of man? After all, did we not build concentration camps for American citizens in free America—equipped, to be sure, with hot and cold running water, and slow-burning social psychologists? Have we not adopted, almost without noticing it, in our acceptance of the very term "DP," the thoroughly un-Western idea that a human being can be thought of as completely devoid of legal rights—with literally less status than any criminal?

To the intellectual, economic reconstruction and military might can do no more than contain the new totalitarian assault—the core of the menace is the insidious cultural corruption which it promotes; and his greatest concern is with the cultural confusion and lowering of standards through which we of the West seem to him to be opening the door to the East's debasement of man. So you find the intellectual today focusing much of his interest on our society's contempt for intelligence and ideas, its misuse of culture and of science as mere tools, and the irresponsible and manipulative role to which industrial organization and the communications industries have diverted the social scientist's techniques and the artist's crafts. Mass culture makes mass man—and mass-production culture is today not only one of America's great interlocking industrial enclaves, it claims to be American culture itself.

In the tidal wave represented by the million-circulation popular magazines, Hollywood films, radio, the book clubs, the comic books, television, the juke boxes—all geared to the lowest-common-denominator mass mind—the specific regional and minority intellectual and religious cultures are flooded out by the uniform culture. But the intellectual has grown fearful of uniformity. Uniform human beings are essentially faceless human beings; if he has learned to be suspicious of the faceless party stalwart and the faceless Nazi and Soviet "common man," he is almost equally suspicious of the faceless corporation vice-president and the faceless scientific expert. He wonders whether the faceless administrator and the faceless citizen are not reverse sides of the same coin—an administrative society in which fitness consists solely in "fitting in," and the one is lost in the all.

This is the specter that haunts the mind of the intellectual today. He maintains his interest in social betterment, but, for the most part, he approaches society on the cultural and social, rather than political, level. In his politics, if he has any, he is no utopian, but is inclined, rather, to weigh promises for regeneration through wholesale "social engineering" against their possible cost in sacrifice of human values and liberties. Security, yes, but along with it vigilance for the protection of the individual and the small group and the specific interest.

He begins to see the American process as something more than the simple adjustment of the single individual to the state and the national culture; he has become aware that

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what is involved is an evolving adjustment (with the guidance and aid of government) of relationships between many groups—economic, social, "ethnic," cultural, religious—to gain the ends that the individual citizen desires for himself and for those to whom he feels bound.

Of late, too, one detects a new note in his sense of personal isolation and alienation, which formerly he wore as a badge of distinction. There is a hunger for some group attachment. It is not good for man to be alone; for his spirit's sake he finds he needs something to interpose between himself and Leviathan industrial society, with its all-pervasive belt-line culture. He has a growing hankering for a smaller community of his own—for shelter and security, appreciation and support. What is lacking is any confidence that such communities, if they exist, will welcome him, and give him and his talents a chance to make themselves count.

IV

WHAT, now, are the relations of this Jewish intellectual of the late 40's to himself as a Jew and to the Jewish community?

First of all, there is no longer the emotion and the struggle over the problem of Jewish identification which gave so much of the color and drive to the Jewish intellectuals' mentality of the 20's, both for good and for bad. The problem of assimilation or escape on the one hand or of participation and identification on the other, is no longer posed—at least not in the same terms. "Jewishness" is accepted. But a corollary of this is that Jewish identification may mean less. One is a Jew because, after Hitler and the six million exterminated, how can one repudiate the bond?

And in some senses the bond is easier, too. For the climate has changed in the broader American world. To one's non-Jewish associates, "Jewishness" is no longer an oddity or a reactionary fact, as it was in an earlier liberal world with its easy (and demanding) universalism; some of the lessons of Nazi anti-Semitism have been learned, and Israel, too, has made a difference; and, also, the bars are increasingly down to the acceptance of the Jew in university faculties, government departments, and various fields of American cultural life. But, as I said, such acceptance can mean little. One is Jewish—so what?

Similarly with participation in Jewish organizations or interest in Jewish political movements: one more likely contributes to Federation or the United Jewish Appeal than one did twenty years ago, and one may have a genuine interest in the fortunes of Israel. But neither involves in any deep way the thinking and inner emotions of this hypothetical Jewish intellectual, since they have little relation to his primary cultural preoccupations and interests. He can be ardently pro-Israel without in any way having the Jewish cultural interests that the Zionist—or even the non-Zionist—intellectual of the 20's had: it must be remembered that in the period of the young intellectual's reawakened Jewish interest the Zionist movement, by felt necessity and plan, abdicated its inspiring role in Jewish culture; for this generation Zionist thought on the place of the Jew and Judaism had become whittled down to a set of political slogans, for Madison Square Garden and newspaper consumption.

At the same time, however, certain aspects of the intellectual's Jewishness may have the highest importance, since they happen to key-in most suggestively with his major concerns. It is his special experience as a Jew, in which the concentration camp is the culmination and the symbol, that is a chief factor in his present central preoccupation with totalitarianism; and it is because of his Jewish position in society that he continues to find himself in a kind of strategic center of this whole question. Inevitably, too, the Jewish intellectual finds himself—in his search for the causes and cure of totalitarian patterns and the hate-breeding and exterminative forces that feed them (and which in turn they breed)—in the company of other Jews intensely concerned, as he is, with civil liberties and human rights, and in one phase or another of social, economic, psychological, and even psychoanalytical study which bears on this central problem. And, to the extent that the problem of anti-Semitism and anti-democratic tendencies remains a continuing interest of Jewish organizations, he is likely to find himself involved in Jewish institutional life. Here is the first link.

SIMILARLY, in his quest for basic moral and spiritual values, he is quite likely

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to knock on Jewish doors. A striking phenomenon of our times is the reappearance on the shelves of the Jewish intellectual of books on religion; and these books are not only the same books of the Christian tradition that are read by his fellow intellectuals in the current revival—Kierkegaard, Niebuhr, Tillich, Eliot, Maritain, and the rest—but the religious works of his own tradition, both the old books and the new books. One hears of at least four circles of Jewish intellectuals at or near universities that meet regularly for the study of theological works. In COMMENTARY there is a department of reprints of classics of Jewish thought ranging from early rabbinic times to the day before yesterday, and we find that no part of the magazine is more carefully read by New York's intellectuals. Similarly, with the fine reprints of the Jewish classics and the excellent works on Judaism published during the past three years by Shocken Books—these find a receptive audience among modern Jewish intellectuals, and not only Jewish intellectuals. The writings of Martin Buber and Leo S. Baeck are increasingly read, and the present vogue for Kafka can be at least partly explained by a combination of the interests in moral and religious problems and in totalitarian trends in our modern society. Best of all, these new interests are already bearing fruit in fresh commentary and original work on ethical and religious themes which, in much of their inspiration and content, may reach back through the centuries, but which, in form and relevance, are altogether modern.

Similarly, in the Jewish intellectual's interest in social betterment—which, we have said, in these days he is likely to approach on a "bits-and-pieces" basis. Today Jews provide much of the dynamism of the present democratic liberal-labor movement; and as the intellectual concerns himself with social thought he also finds that the problems of Jews and other so-called "minorities" and the problems of American society as a whole intertwine and illuminate each other. To understand either, he must understand both. And he discovers too that his kind of cause finds much of its substantial support from American Jews, not only as individuals but through their community organizations. This is especially true of psychological and sociological study in group relations, and in the development of social democratic thinking and procedures in the labor-management field. As for the creative artist—whether he be painter, musician, or poet—he has been finding his situation and experience as a Jew profoundly suggestive; and it can hardly escape his notice that, whether he deals with Jewish or general themes, the most appreciative audience for his best work (and indeed for American culture generally) will somehow turn out to be in large part Jewish. One of COMMENTARY's writers, a member of the avant-garde in very good standing, reported the other day, with the sense of an important personal discovery, that whenever an article of his appeared it seemed to be read and argued about "by the most amazing variety of people in all kinds of circles," and that for the first time as a practicing intellectual he had a sense of being a part of some kind of community in which his ideas counted for something. Similar testimony has been voiced by others, non-Jewish as well as Jewish, on more than one occasion; and warily some have begun to live with the idea that maybe one could find some closer relation with that community. (And since intellectuals have children, too, they are affected by the new awareness of present-day Jewish children's need of community, so evident at this time among both "emancipated" Jewish parents *and* children.)

A few have even gone further, venturing with some trepidation the possibility that from the questioning and ferment within the American Jewish group there might develop a kind of thinking which, integrating Jewish and American need, experience, and wisdom, might have a particular contribution to make, not only for the Jew, but for contemporary man generally in his peculiar dilemmas.

IT WAS put this way, perhaps too simply and hopefully, by another of COMMENTARY's writers in a recent university address:

"It is Jewish—although it is also Yankee Vermont and Middle Atlantic and Mid-Western, as exemplified in John Dewey, Walt Whitman, and Abraham Lincoln—to think of human life and human personality as uniquely precious; to think of body and soul, the profane and the sacred, the divine and the secular, as being inseparably intertwined. It is Jewish—but it is also a mode of thought most congenial to the American

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climate—to accept no permanent separation of the theoretical and the practical, of the dream and of the reality. And it is Jewish—though not alone Jewish—to think of society as made for man, and the abundance of earth for his use, and even the injunctions of the Divine as made but for man's guidance and needs. And it is Jewish also—but at the heart of the American democratic vision, too—to think of the congregation and the society as not being divided into the elite and the masses, the priest and the laity, the cadre and the rank-and-file, the master and the man; but to think of each person as being his own master and his own man. And it is Jewish—and very American, in the best sense—to have very strong and intense commitments to one's self and one's own kin, and at the same time to have the deepest ties and bonds with man universal and humanity at large."

Such, in sketchy outline, are some of the considerations and aspirations that seem to have made Jewish problems and Jewish thought a relevant and strategic area of concern for the Jewish intellectual, and his association with Jewishness and his fellow Jews easier and more secure. In turn, his Jewish and his general cultural interests no longer seem to stand in an either-or, conflicting relationship. At their best, they seem to flow together naturally, both necessary parts of one equation.

V

WE WOULD, however, be ignoring the plain facts if we pretended that the relationship between this Jewish intellectual* generation and the official Jewish community and its institutions was close and intimate. The bridge has not been built. There is still a vast amount of strangeness, standoffishness, mutual suspicion, and, occasionally, recrimination. Recently a very important rabbinical leader told me that the Jewish intellectuals were not really Jewish and, anyway, were undependable and irresponsible. And only the other day one of our outstanding creative writers said that there was no reason to speculate too deeply on the rift between Jewish intellectuals and the Jewish community. The reason was simple: Jewish community life was just too devoid of intellectual and cultural substance of any quality—just too damned boring.

Shrugging off these two extreme viewpoints, perhaps it would be useful to canvass some of the impediments that apparently exist to the marriage of true minds, that match between Jewish institutional life and the Jewish intellectual that so many self-appointed shadchans are anxiously seeking to bring about.

Here, for what it is worth, is a little anthology of these impediments as intellectuals complain of them to this writer.

First: We community people, they say, are parochial, interested solely in our own narrow concerns, chewing over the same old words, without reference to ideas and events in the American scene outside us or in the world at large. Jewish interests are pushed forward with self-absorbed indifference to any relation they might have to other interests. Jewish intellectual and religious problems are discussed in the concepts of twenty years ago or forty years ago, with little awareness of the more contemporary inner struggles or insights of other traditions, or for that matter of Western culture as a whole; nor does such discussion reflect the deep moral and spiritual questions posed for Jewish political thinking and Judaism itself, both by Jewish fate and mankind's crisis in the past decade. In the meantime, according to at least one critic, in Reform Judaism little is left of the strenuous ideal of Isaac M. Wise but a genteel Jewish-flavored 19th-century progressivism, while the movement which calls itself Conservative (or normative) Judaism (and is really the Reform Judaism of the East European immigrant generation) offers its constituency a "practical" mixture of nationalist sociology, fundamentalist doctrinal orthodoxy, and ritual revisionism, without benefit of any strong theological vision or social impulse. Similarly, Jewish history is written as if it happened in a vacuum. For example, a distinguished historian re-

*Judah L. Magnes, who saw an earlier manuscript of this essay, suggested that it might be well, in view of the varying and often derogatory use of the term, to define what we mean here by the term "the intellectuals." By the intellectuals we mean—and we believe this represents a quite general use of the term even today, especially among Jews—those individuals who demonstrate a serious, devoted concern for ideas and art, and the human values they represent, and some imaginative creative capacity for their continuance and renewal.

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cently wrote a lengthy account of the liberation of the Jews of Rome in World War II; but at no place did he find room for much mention of anyone else in Italy except Nazis and Jews; and when liberation came, there were only American soldiers and liberated Jews. The fact that there were other inhabitants of the peninsula, who were also liberated, was all but ignored.

Second: Jewish institutional life shows little sign of being interested in intellectual or cultural values at all. Often its leaders are contemptuous of ideas or culture. Indeed, many are frankly anti-intellectual; and, in marked contrast to the traditional Jewish respect for ideas and learning, there is a whole vocabulary of sneer words among institutional people (including religious functionaries) to characterize intellectual concerns and their practitioners. If the community finds any use for intellectuals, it is only as technicians for short-range, bread-and-butter needs, in connection with philanthropic and fund-raising endeavors, i.e., as publicity writers, advertising copy writers, ghost writers, or similar auxiliaries. Inverting the old phrase, we insist on sending men on boys' errands. Almost nowhere is there any continuous activity that would involve the long-term, long-time use of the intellectuals' best capacities.

Jewish cultural indifferentism—the lack of any real concern with meanings and values—is ascribed to two sources, which seem to interact and reinforce each other. First, the dominance of the immediate and the "practical," the furious concentration on organization, fund-raising, philanthropic needs, and "social action," perhaps understandable in a community so young, faced with so many emergency tasks. Second, there is among many—it is asserted—the timorousness and embarrassment at facing up to themselves as Jews, and turning their minds on the meanings of the American Jewish experience and where it is leading, or should be leading. One example: social work represents possibly the broadest, richest, and most cultivated field of Jewish activity in America. But one can sit for hours at a national federation assembly or professional social work conference without noting any serious awareness, much less discussion, of the relation of the professional problems and techniques under consideration to the peculiar status, needs, or experience of the vastly changed and changing Jewish group in America, not to speak of any serious attempt at genuine study or rethinking of the aims and goals which should begin to guide us in the decades ahead. Admittedly, it is hardly likely that intellectuals have much to contribute to the revamping of organizational structure or to institutional administration; but how long, it is asked, can one hope to steer such large communal ships in the turbulent waters ahead without giving more thought to the kind of intelligent direction-finding that only informed analysis and creative thinking can provide?

Third: In such cultural endeavors as are planned, there is a misguided notion afloat that creativity can be provided by, or under, administrative or other personalities who have little cultural background, experience, or interest. It is a rare sector in Jewish communal life where the task of encouraging thinking, writing, art, or music is put in the hands of men and women who have demonstrated any talent, capacity, or flair for these fields. Encouragement of culture, moreover, has all too often meant completely ignoring the key necessity—the encouragement of the individual writer or artist: forgotten is the simple fact that it is the creative individual that produces culture, not organizational factories.

As a matter of fact, Jewish community energies are turned, for the most part, to organizing campaigns and perfecting techniques for promoting, publicizing, and mass-distributing a yet almost non-existent American Jewish culture. Imitating Prune Week, we concentrate on a Jewish Book Month, making this annual little publicity splurge the community's total official activity on behalf of books.

Similarly, there is the delusion that we can solve basic cultural problems by organizational short cuts. We have been witnessing efforts of national organizations to capture the jurisdiction over the whole field of American Jewish culture on the community wall chart, on behalf of one or another ideological interest; and there is no end of schemes (some sincere, some merely exploitative) to create culture through "scientific" sociological surveys, congresses, conferences, and organizational resolutions.

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Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth: We take them quickly together because we have heard them so often. *Institutional caution*—the restraint on the free and lively exchange of ideas, so indispensable to cultural activity, imposed by fear lest the prestige and omniscience of very important people or very important institutions be questioned or impugned—or fund-raising possibilities in any way prejudiced. *The protective interest*—the self-imposed censorship on honest recording of Jewish experience and decent self-criticism, lest the *goyim* hear and "use it against us." This means writing about Jews with one's eyes eternally looking over the shoulder in nervous watchfulness. Ever striving to put our best face forward, the face inevitably has the spuriousness—and dullness—of official portraits. Apologetics is the great blight of Jewish culture. Leaving aside the sheer spiritual shoddiness of substituting the plastic surgeon for the historian, we fool nobody. There is warrant for the assertion that in the field of culture, the best public relations is no public relations. *Low cultural standards*—the willingness to accept (and to canonize) achievements in religious thought, novels and short stories, history, and music that, by general standards, are not even third-rate. Hence, the odd paradox—that the same Jewish group that would feel itself personally and communally disgraced if its Mt. Sinai and Beth Israel hospitals were not Class A and better, decade after decade tolerates an official Jewish culture that is by and large Class D, more fitting for some backwater denominational sect than for one of the major religio-cultural traditions of the world. After all, what Jewish religious work was it that was most fervently acclaimed by the Jewish community in the last five years?

Seventh: Here, perhaps, intellectuals feel, is the deepest malady—the current prevalence of a kind of atmosphere of zealotry which breeds separatism with reference to the outside world and inner factionalism within the Jewish group. Baneful enough in the field of politics, this atmosphere is devastation itself in the field of thinking, culture, and religion. It substitutes sloganeering and name-calling for discussion. In its extreme forms in Jewish life, it polarizes legitimate and diverse views into a struggle between "treason" and "the only true truth." It puts loyalty to certain labels and banners in the center of the cultural stage, and it tries to enforce unity by verbal terrorism rather than by intellectual accord. It seeks to enshrine the word "Jewishness" as a shibboleth, a substitute for the larger task, which is to search out, reshape, and renew Judaism as a way of thinking and living. It is so busy hunting out heretics who will not bend the knee to the phrase "Jewish content" that it has little energy left for giving "Jewish content" any content.

I, too, think this mood is dangerous. One detects a note of desperation about such current phrases as "positive Judaism" and "affirmative Jewishness" and "survivalism" which is neither conducive to civilized Jewish life nor, for that matter, justified by the facts. I have come to think that there is too much fright in American Jewish life today. We are all properly contemptuous of those Jews who are frightened *of* Jewishness. We should begin to be a little nervous about the Jews who are frightened *for* Jewishness, who seem to have a desperate sense of the imminent disappearance of Jews in America and of the decay and disintegration of every Jewish institution and every Jewish value.

VI

It is this sense of fright, this lack of confidence in the staying power of Jewish life that—so, at least it seems to me—lies at the root of so many of our cultural ills.

Paradoxically, we seem to be frightened of the climate of liberty—as if Judaism were a plant that the sunlight of freedom could only serve to wither. Recently, I had a sudden sense of how deep this nervousness went on reading three essays by a noted Jewish academician. These essays pointed out that for the first time in our long history there were few places on the globe where the Jew was not legally emancipated. But he reported this news with such overtones of anxiety and wringing of hands, of nostalgia and despair, as if this emancipation were the worst possible calamity. And, similarly, though there is no American Jewish thinker of any group who does not write of integration into American life as a challenge and an opportunity, there is always along with it, when Jewish values are talked about, such a sense of shrinking, withdrawal, and haste to put up the shutters and erect barriers.

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After the fair, honorific words about integration into America in the opening paragraphs, somehow as we go along in the text, the words "America" and "Western culture" disappear and, instead, we hear talk about the "environment," that is, America, that has much the same overtones of fear and hostility that marked the ancient Greeks when they talked about the wind, the sea, the rocks, and the storms. It becomes clear that of "the environment" most Jewish institutional people expect only one thing: the attrition and erosion of every Jewish value they hold dear.

If I write about this at some length, it is because to my mind it is this attitude—and the separatist ideologies and programs it breeds in religious thinking, Jewish education, political and "protective" activity, and other Jewish areas—that seems to be the most formidable barrier between the creative Jewish intellectual and institutional Jewish life today. We cannot expect the fraternal working together of true minds on tasks of mutual concern unless there is more adventurousness and less timidity. We have everything to gain and nothing to fear. Above all, I think we are strong enough to risk it.

We are strong enough in numbers—five million of us in America, two million of us in New York; most of us, to one degree or another, still under the influence of "that old rabbinic conditioning," in the happy phrase of Erwin R. Goodenough. Materially, we are by no means the poorest section of the population, and in the last two decades we have erected an amazingly strong and articulated communal framework which, with all its faults, has little to learn in organizational ingenuity, effectiveness, and, incidentally, democracy, from any Jewish pattern of recent centuries. And only the other day the sociologist Leo Srole was telling us that he sensed a social stability in the group that indicated that the process of assimilation was slowing down and a kind of equilibrium was making itself apparent. Above all, Jews today accept themselves as Jews. Survival is no longer the problem. Jewry will survive in Israel. Jewry will survive in America also.

It is not existence that should trouble us now, but the quality of our living.

TODAY, if it is wise, the community will throw the doors wide open to the most diverse kinds of personalities and influences. Let us have confidence enough in the strength and validity of our traditional Jewish ideas and cultural patterns to expose them to the free competition of other ideas, without the protection of artificial tariff barriers, which they do not need. They can stand up; and perhaps not only for us, but for all human beings. Let us not make conformance to slogans or creeds or dogmas the test. Let us rather make relevance and quality the tests, and leave ourselves receptive to wisdom and insight from whatever quarter they come; and not least of all from the great variety of cultural strains *within the Jewish group itself*. We have talked of and hoped for a cultural pluralism in American life. Is it too much to ask for a cultural pluralism in Jewish thinking and culture too?

It will not be easy. The American social system and the American cultural milieu in its present stage have all kinds of pitfalls and dangers for us, as they have for every group, including the New England native white Protestant group, whose ancestors came over on the Mayflower. Undoubtedly the tides of mass uniformity and mass vulgarization threaten every decent Jewish value; and indeed they threaten us today not alone from the outside, but from within our own community. Much of the mediocrity, vulgarity, and low standards that intellectuals complain of within the official Jewish culture represent the corruption of Jewish values via the imitation and wholesale adoption of the values of mass communication, advertising, and propaganda culture. If the Philistines are upon us, some of the most savage among them are Jewish Philistines, assimilationists to Western nationalism and power and success values at their crassest level. (And this is equally true whether such assimilationists are of the vigilante type, watchful of the 100 per cent American loyalty of their fellow-Jews, or the Jewish chauvinist type, bent on terrorizing their fellow Jews into their own anti-Gentile whirling-dervish brand of "militant Jewishness.")

However, to reiterate, if present-day commercialized ersatz culture threatens our best values, both from without the community and within, it threatens the best values of others also. What is that but another way of saying that American society and American culture are still in process? And

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that has its positive side, too. For it means that we are not mere outsiders trying to break into an already achieved perfection, but partners in a still half-finished enterprise that needs us, too.

One does not have to be a constitutional optimist not to feel desperate about the prospects for American Jewish culture. Quite soberly, I believe that even on these shores, yes, in this 20th century, we may well see the Jewish intellectual-religious tradition flower in ways that will stand comparison with Spain, Germany, Eastern Europe, and elsewhere. Not that one is unaware of the frightful casualties Jews have suffered in recent years in scholarship, learning, art, and, in particular, in irreplaceable creative personalities. But one is also gratefully conscious of the personalities that, by good fortune or destiny, have found refuge on our shores, and have already contributed so greatly to our cultural wealth and enlightenment.

Also, there are signs and omens and stirrings. One notes the increasing use (part-time or full-time) of fresh intellectual talent—both from the universities and the various fields of art—in the programs of some of the key institutions in Jewish life; and a new respect and scope granted to genuinely creative personalities already associated with Jewish life. And, perhaps most important of all, the fact with which we began: that in the midst of all of their absorption in programs of philanthropy, relief, rescue, and for the safeguarding of Israel's hard-won victory, the same communal-minded American Jews, who as a group demonstrated such a remarkably unhysterical and seasoned capacity for meeting the vast emergency problems of the last decade, are today showing a heightened concern with the long-range, deeper problems of Jewish living in America.

PERHAPS it is only a straw in the wind, but we at COMMENTARY think we have noted that your so-called "typical Jewish community leader" as often as not is most excited by the kind of article that Jewish intellectuals are most excited by—those that represent a genuine effort to grapple, in a fresh way, with the problems of Jewish being—even when the reasoning is subtle and the language difficult. And one senses a new dignity and maturity in his approach to cultural activity generally; for example, a desire for Jewish history that is "real history," and for study, investigation, and writing that will enable us to see ourselves as we really are—and let the neighbors look, too. What have we to hide?

It is in this conjuncture between the present genuine interest of the congregation and the intellectual's own work that the great hope for cultural creativity lies. Both have found themselves too sharply confronted with the dilemmas of the world to be satisfied any longer with glib slogans, easy catchwords, and hackneyed and mediocre images, philosophies, and ideals.

One needs only to listen and everywhere one hears American Jews saying that now that Israel is established, really we must take time for thought as to what ideals and goals we must live by as American Jews. Significantly—and this is true of Zionist as well as non-Zionist—few are seriously suggesting any more that we can live by a culture imported wholesale from another country—even if that country is Israel; or by some fixed authoritative Jewish pattern of belief or behavior, however sanctioned by honorable use in Frankfort on the Main, Volozhin, or latter-day Jerusalem. There is a growing realization that out of all the various heritages we have to hand, in all their rich and living diversity—and drawing also on fraternal cultural interchange with Israel and Europe—we must create our own culture, for our own needs and our own times, just as our ancestors did for their own.

The whole point of this report is to indicate that if the community truly means what it is saying today, the human resources are present and available for the first time in two decades. The intellectuals are there. If the marriage is to be made it is only for Jewish communal-minded people to show *by their actions* that their intentions are honorable—and serious. And not only in relation to the intellectuals, but to their own high resolutions to find a civilized, integrated pattern of living for themselves as American Jews in this hopeful country's unfolding society.

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UNCLE REMUS AND THE MALEVOLENT RABBIT

"Takes a Limber-Toe Gemmun fer ter Jump Jim Crow"

BERNARD WOLFE

AUNT JEMIMA, Beulah, the Gold Dust Twins, "George" the Pullman-ad porter, Uncle Remus. . . . We like to picture the Negro as grinning at us. In Jack de Capitator, the bottle opener that looks like a gaping minstrel face, the grin is a kitchen utensil. At Mammy's Shack, the Seattle roadside inn built in the shape of a minstrel's head, you walk into the neon grin to get your hamburger. . . . And always the image of the Negro—as we create it—signifies some bounty—for us. Eternally the Negro gives—but (as they say in the theater) *really gives*—grinning from ear to ear.

Gifts without end, according to the billboards, movie screens, food labels, soap operas, magazine ads, singing commercials. Our daily bread: Cream O' Wheat, Uncle Ben's Rice, Wilson Ham ("The Ham What Am!"), those "happifyin'" Aunt Jemima pancakes for our "temptilatin'" breakfasts. Our daily drink, too: Carioca Puerto Rican Rum, Hiram Walker whiskey, Ballantine's Ale. Through McCallum and Propper, the Negro gives milady the new "dark Creole shades" in her sheer nylons; through the House of Vigny, her "grotesque," "fuzzy-wuzzy" bottles of Golliwogg colognes and perfumes. Shoeshines, snow-white laundry, comfortable lower berths, efficient handling of luggage; jazz, jive, jitterbugging, zoot, comedy, and the wonderful tales of Brer Rabbit to entrance the kiddies. Service with a smile. . . .

"The Negroes," writes Geoffrey Gorer, "are kept in their subservient position by the ultimate sanctions of fear and force, and this is well known to whites and Negroes alike. Nevertheless, the whites demand that the Negroes shall appear smiling, eager, and friendly in all their dealings with them."

But if the grin is extracted by force, may not the smiling face be a falseface—and just underneath is there not something else, often only half-hidden?

UNCLE REMUS—a kind of blackface Will Rogers, complete with standard minstrel dialect and plantation shuffle—has had remarkable staying power in our popular culture, much more than Daddy Long Legs, say, or even Uncle Tom. Within the past two years alone he has inspired a full-length Disney feature, three Hit Parade songs, a widely circulated album of recorded dialect stories, a best-selling juvenile picture book, a syndicated comic strip. And the wily hero of his animal fables, Brer Rabbit—to whom Bugs Bunny and perhaps even Harvey owe more than a little—is today a much bigger headliner than Bambi or Black Beauty, outclassing even Donald Duck.

For almost seventy years, Uncle Remus has been the prototype of the Negro grinner-giver. Nothing ever clouds the "beaming countenance" of the "venerable old darky"; nothing ever interrupts the flow of his "hearty," "mellow," "cheerful and good-humored" voice as, decade after decade, he presents his Brer Rabbit stories to the nation.

FOR generations, American children and adults have chuckled over the adventures of Uncle Remus's Brer Rabbit. BERNARD WOLFE here suggests that Uncle Remus's loyal white readers may not, after all, have properly understood that the joke was on them: at the heart of the merry fables was the half-suppressed revenge of a resentful minority. Mr. Wolfe was born in New Haven in 1915 and studied at Yale. His study of Uncle Remus is part of a larger work on the Negro in American popular culture which he hopes to complete in the near future. He is the author (with Mezz Mezzrow) of *Really the Blues*, and is at present also working on a study of the bebop cult and a novel.

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But Remus too is a white man's brainchild: he was created in the columns of the Atlanta *Constitution,* back in the early 1880's, by a neurotic young Southern journalist named Joel Chandler Harris (1848-1908).

When Remus grins, Harris is pulling the strings; when he "gives" his folk stories, he is the ventriloquist's dummy on Harris's knee.

The setting for these stories never varies: the little white boy, son of "Miss Sally" and "Mars John," the plantation owners, comes "hopping and skipping" into the old Negro's cabin down in back of the "big house" and the story telling session gets under way. Remus's face "breaks up into little eddies of smiles"; he takes his admirer on his knee, "strokes the child's hair thoughtfully and caressingly," calls him "honey." The little boy "nestles closer" to his "sable patron" and listens with "open-eyed wonder."

No "sanctions of fear and force" here, Harris insists—the relationship between narrator and auditor is one of unmitigated tenderness. Remus "gives," with a "kindly beam" and a "most infectious chuckle"; the little boy receives with mingled "awe," "admiration," and "delight." But, if one looks more closely, within the magnanimous caress is an incredibly malevolent blow.

Of the several Remus collections published by Harris, the first and most famous is *Uncle Remus: His Songs and His Sayings.* Brer Rabbit appears twenty-six times in this book, encounters the Fox twenty times, soundly trounces him nineteen times. The Fox, on the other hand, achieves only two very minor triumphs—one over the Rabbit, another over the Sparrow. On only two other occasions is the Rabbit victimized even slightly, both times by animals as puny as himself (the Tarrypin, the Buzzard); but when he is pitted against adversaries as strong as the Fox (the Wolf, the Bear, once the whole Animal Kingdom) he emerges the unruffled winner. The Rabbit finally kills off all three of his powerful enemies. The Fox is made a thorough fool of by all the weakest animals—the Buzzard, the Tarrypin, the Bull-Frog.

All told, there are twenty-eight victories of the Weak over the Strong; ultimately all the Strong die violent deaths at the hands of the Weak; and there are, at most, two very insignificant victories of the Strong over the Weak. . . . Admittedly, folk symbols are seldom systematic, clean-cut, or specific; they are cultural shadows thrown by the unconscious, and the unconscious is not governed by the sharp-edged neatness of the filing cabinet. But still, on the basis of the tally-sheet alone, is it too far-fetched to take Brer Rabbit as a symbol—about as sharp as Southern sanctions would allow—of the Negro slave's festering hatred of the white man?

It depends, of course, on whether these are animals who maul and murder each other, or human beings disguised as animals. Here Harris and Remus seem to differ. "In dem days," Remus often starts, "de creeturs wuz santer'n 'roun' same like fokes." But for Harris—so he insists—this anthropomorphism is only incidental. What the stories depict, he tells us, is only the "roaring comedy of animal life."

Is it? These are very un-Aesopian creatures who speak a vaudeville dialect, hold candy-pulls, run for the legislature, fight and scheme over gold mines, compete for women in elaborate rituals of courtship and self-aggrandizement, sing plantation ditties about "Jim Crow," read the newspapers after supper, and kill and maim each other—not in gusts of endocrine Pavlov passion but coldbloodedly, for prestige, plotting their crafty moves in advance and often using accomplices. . . . Harris sees no malice in all this, even when heads roll. Brer Rabbit, he explains, is moved not by "malice, but mischievousness." But Brer Rabbit "mischievously" scalds the Wolf to death, makes the innocent Possum die in a fire to cover his own crimes, tortures and probably murders the Bear by setting a swarm of bees on him—and, after causing the fatal beating of the Fox, carries his victim's head to Mrs. Fox and her children, hoping to trick them into eating it in their soup. . . .

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ONE dramatic tension in these stories seems to be a gastronomic one: *Will the communal meal ever take place in the "Animal" Kingdom?*

The food-sharing issue is posed in the very first story. "I seed Brer B'ar yistiddy," the Fox tells the Rabbit as the story opens, "en he sorter rake me over de coals kaze you en me ain't make frens en live naborly." He then invites the Rabbit to supper—intending that his guest will be the main course in this "joint" feast. Brer Rabbit solemnly accepts the invitation, shows up, makes the Fox look ridiculous, and blithely scampers off: "En Brer Fox ain't kotch 'im yit, en w'at's mo', honey, he ain't gwine ter." The Rabbit can get along very well without the communal meal; but, it soon develops, Brer Fox and his associates can't live without it.

Without food-sharing, no community. Open warfare breaks out immediately after the Fox's hypocritical invitation; and the Rabbit is invariably the victor in the gory skirmishes. And after he kills and skins the Wolf, his other enemies are so cowed that now the communal meal finally seems about to take place: "de animals en de creeturs, dey kep' on gittin' mo' en mo' familious wid wunner nudder—bunchin' der perwishuns tergidder in de same shanty" and "takin' a snack" together too.

But Brer Rabbit isn't taken in. Knowing that the others are sharing their food with him out of fear, not genuine communality, he remains the complete cynic and continues to raid the Fox's goober patch and the Bear's persimmon orchard. Not until the closing episode does the Fox make a genuine food-sharing gesture—he crawls inside Bookay the Cow with Brer Rabbit and gratuitously shows him how to hack out all the beef he can carry. But the communal overture comes too late. In an act of the most supreme malevolence, the Rabbit betrays his benefactor to the farmer and stands by, "makin' like he mighty sorry," while the Fox is beaten to death. . . . And now the meal which aborted in the beginning, because the Fox's friendliness was only a ruse, almost does take place—with the Fox as the main course. Having brutally destroyed his arch enemy, Brer Rabbit tries to make Mrs. Fox cook a soup with her husband's head, and almost succeeds.

Remus is not an anthropomorphist by accident. His theme is a *human* one—neighborliness—and the communal meal is a symbol for it. His moral? There are no good neighbors in the world, neither equality nor fraternity. But the moral has an underside: the Rabbit can never be trapped.

ANOTHER tension runs through the stories: *Who gets the women?* In sex, Brer Rabbit is at his most aggressive—and his most invincible. Throughout he is engaged in murderous competition with the Fox and the other animals for the favors of "Miss Meadows en de gals."

In their sexual competition the Rabbit never fails to humiliate the Fox viciously. "I'll show Miss Meadows en de gals dat I'm de boss er Brer Fox," he decides. And he does: through the most elaborate trickery he persuades the Fox to put on a saddle, then rides him past Miss Meadows' house, digging his spurs in vigorously. . . . And in sex, it would seem, there are no false distinctions between creatures—all differences in status are irrelevant. At Miss Meadows' the feuds of the work-a-day world must be suspended, "kaze Miss Meadows, she done put her foot down, she did, en say dat w'en dey come ter her place dey hatter hang up a flag er truce at de front gate en 'bide by it."

The truce is all to the Rabbit's advantage, because if the competitors start from scratch in the sexual battle the best man must win—and the best man is invariably Brer Rabbit. The women themselves want the best man to win. Miss Meadows decides to get some peace by holding a contest and letting the winner have his pick of the girls. The Rabbit mulls the problem over. He sings ironically,

Make a bow ter de Buzzard en den ter de Crow
Takes a limber-toe gemmun fer ter jump Jim Crow.

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Then, through a tricky scheme, he proceeds to outshine all the stronger contestants.

Food-sharing, sex-sharing—the Remus stories read like a catalogue of Southern racial taboos, all standing on their heads. The South, wearing the blinders of stereotype, has always tried to see the Negro as a "roaringly comic" domestic animal. Understandably; for animals of the tame or domestic variety are not menacing—they are capable only of mischief, never of malice. But the Negro slave, through his anthropomorphic Rabbit stories, seems to be hinting that even the frailest and most humble of "animals" can let fly with the most bloodthirsty aggressions. And these aggressions take place in the two most sacrosanct areas of Southern racial etiquette: the gastronomic and the erotic.

The South, with its "sanctions of fear and force," forbids Negroes to eat at the same table with whites. But Brer Rabbit, through an act of murder, *forces* Brer Fox and all his associates to share their food with him. The South enjoins the Negro, under penalty of death, from coming near the white man's women—although the white man has free access to the Negro's women. But Brer Rabbit flauntingly demonstrates his sexual superiority over all the other animals and, as the undisputed victor in the sexual competition, gets his choice of *all* the women.

And yet, despite these food and sex taboos, for two solid centuries—for the Rabbit stories existed long before Harris put them on paper—Southerners chuckled at the way the Rabbit terrorized all the other animals into the communal meal, roared at the Rabbit's guile in winning the girls away from the Fox *by jumping Jim Crow*. And they were endlessly intrigued by the O. Henry spasm of the miraculous in the very last story, right after the Fox's death: "Some say dat . . . Brer Rabbit married ole Miss Fox. . . ."

An interesting denouement, considering the sexual fears which saturate the South's racial attitudes. Still more interesting that Southern whites should even have countenanced it, let alone revelled in it. . . .

Significantly, the goal of eating and sex, as depicted in Uncle Remus, is not instinct-gratification. The overriding drive is for *prestige*—the South is a prestige-haunted land. And it is in that potent intangible that the Rabbit is always paid off most handsomely for his exploits. Throughout, as he terrorizes the Strong, the "sassy" Rabbit remains bland, unperturbed, sure of his invincibility. When he humiliates the Fox by turning him into a saddle-horse, he mounts him "same's ef he wuz king er de patter-rollers." ("Patter-rollers," Harris cheerfully points out, were the white patrols that terrorized Negro slaves so they wouldn't wander off the plantations.)

Brer Rabbit, in short, has all the jaunty topdog airs and attitudes which a slave can only dream of having. And, like the slave, he has a supremely cynical view of the social world, since he sees it from below. The South is the most etiquette-ridden region of the country; and the Rabbit sees all forms of etiquette as hypocritical and absurd. Creatures meet, address each other with unctuous politeness, inquire after each other's families, pass the time of day with oily clichés—and all the while they are plotting to humiliate, rob, and assassinate each other. The Rabbit sees through it all; if he is serene it is only because he can plot more rapidly and with more deadly efficiency than any of the others.

The world, in Brer Rabbit's wary eyes, is a jungle. Life is a battle-unto-the-death for food, sex, power, prestige, a battle without rules. There is only one reality in this life: who is on top? But Brer Rabbit wastes no time lamenting the mad unneighborly scramble for the top position. Because it is by no means ordained that the Weak can never take over. In his topsy-turvy world, to all practical purposes, the Weak *have* taken over. In one episode, the Rabbit falls down a well in a bucket. He can get back up only by enticing the Fox to climb into the other bucket. The Fox is duped: he drops down and the Rabbit rises, singing as he passes his enemy:

Good-by, Brer Fox, take keer yo' cloze
Fer dis is de way de worril goes

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Some goes up en some goes down
You'll git ter de bottom all safe en soun'.

This is the theme song of the stories. The question remains, who sings it? The Rabbit is a creation of Uncle Remus's people; is it, then, Uncle Remus singing? But Uncle Remus is a creation of Joel Chandler Harris. . . .

THERE is a significant difference in ages—some hundreds of years—between Uncle Remus and Brer Rabbit. The Rabbit had been the hero of animal stories popular among Negroes from the early days of slavery; these were genuine folk tales told by Negroes to Negroes and handed down in oral form. Uncle Remus was added only when Harris, in packaging the stories—using the Negro grin for gift-wrapping—invented the Negro narrator to sustain the dialect.

Harris, then, fitted the hate-imbued folk materials into a framework, a white man's framework, of "love." He took over the animal characters and situations of the original stories and gave them a human setting: the loving and lovable Negro narrator, the adoring white auditor. Within this framework of love, the blow was heavily padded with caresses and the genuine folk was almost emasculated into the cute folksy.

Almost, but not quite. Harris all his life was torn between his furtive penchant for fiction and his profession of journalism. It was the would-be novelist in him who created Remus, the "giver" of interracial caresses; but the trained journalist in him, having too good an eye and ear, reported the energetic folk blow in the caress. Thus the curious tension in his versions between "human" form and "animal" content.

Before Harris, few Southerners had ever faced squarely the aggressive symbolism of Brer Rabbit, or the paradox of their delight in it. Of course: it was part of the Southerner's undissected myth—often shared by the Negroes—that his cherished childhood sessions in the slave quarters were bathed in two-way benevolence. But Harris, by writing the white South and its Negro tale-spinners into the stories, also wrote in its unfaced paradoxes. Thus his versions helped to rip open the racial myth—and, with it, the interracial grin.

WHAT was the slippery rabbit-hero doing in these stories to begin with? Where did he come from? As soon as Harris wrote down the oral stories for mass consumption, these questions began to agitate many whites. The result was a whole literature devoted to proving the "un-American" genealogy of Brer Rabbit.

Why, one Southern writer asks, did the Negro pick the Rabbit for a hero? Could it be because the Rabbit was "symbolic of his own humble and helpless condition in comparison with his master the owner of the plantation"? Perhaps the Rabbit represents the Negro "in revolt at . . . his own subordinate and insignificant place in society"?

But no: if the Negro is capable of rebelling against society—American society—even symbolically, he is a menace. The Negro must be in revolt against *Nature,* against the "subordinate and insignificant place" assigned to him by biological fate, not America. The writer reassures himself: the Negro makes animals act "like a low order of human intelligence, such as the Negro himself [can] comprehend." The Negro naturally feels "more closely in touch with [the lower animals] than with the white man who [is] so superior to him in every respect." No threat in Brer Rabbit; his genealogy, having no *American* roots, is a technical matter for "the psychologist or the student of folklore."

However, uneasy questions were raised; and as they were raised they were directed at Harris. Readers sensed the symbolic taunts and threats in the Rabbit and insisted on knowing whether they were directed against white America—or against "Nature." Harris took refuge from this barrage of questions in two mutually contradictory formulas: (1) he was merely the "compiler" of these stories, a non-intellectual, a lowly humorist, ignorant of "folkloristic" matters; and (2) Brer Rabbit was most certainly, as Southerners intuited, an undiluted African.

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"All that I know—all that we Southerners know—about it," Harris protested, "is that every old plantation mammy in the South is full of these stories." But, a sentence later, Harris decided there *was* one other thing he knew: "One thing is certain—the Negro did not get them from the whites; *probably they are of remote African origin.*" And if they come from the Congo, they offer no symbolic blows to Americans; they are simply funny. So Harris warns the folklorists: "First let us have the folktales told as they were intended to be told, for the sake of amusement. . . ."

But if the folklorists *should* find in them something "of value to their pretensions"? Then "let it be picked out and preserved with as little cackling as possible."

THE South wavered; it could not shake off the feeling that Brer Rabbit's overtones were more than just funny. And Harris, too, wavered. To a British folklorist editor he wrote, suddenly reversing himself, that the stories were "more important than humorous." And in the introduction to his book he explains that "however humorous it may be in effect, its intention is perfectly serious. . . . It seems to me that a volume written wholly in dialect must have its solemn, not to say melancholy features."

What was it that Harris sporadically found "important," "solemn," even "melancholy" here? It turns out to be the *Americanism* of Brer Rabbit: "it needs no scientific investigation," Harris continues in his introduction, "to show why he [the Negro] selects as his hero the weakest and most harmless of all animals. . . . It is not virtue that triumphs, but helplessness. . . . Indeed, the parallel between the case of the 'weakest' of all animals, who must, perforce, triumph through his shrewdness, and the humble condition of the slave raconteur, is not without its pathos."

A suggestive idea. But such a "parallel" could not have been worked out in the African jungle, before slavery; it implies that Brer Rabbit, after all, was born much closer to the Mississippi than to the Congo. . . . This crucial sentence does not occur in later editions. Instead we read: "It would be presumptious [*sic*] in me to offer an opinion as to the origins of these curious myth-stories; but, *if ethnologists should discover that they did not originate with the African, the proof to that effect should be accompanied with a good deal of persuasive eloquence.*"

In this pressing sentence we can see Harris's whole fragmented psyche mirrored. Like all the South, he was caught in a subjective tug-of-war: his intelligence groped for the venomous American slave crouching behind the Rabbit, but his beleaguered racial emotions, in self-defense, had to insist on the "Africanism" of Brer Rabbit—and of the Negro. Then Miss Sally and Mars John could relish his "quaint antics" without recognizing themselves as his targets.

Against the African origin of Brer Rabbit one may argue that he is an eloquent white folk-symbol too, closely related to the lamb as the epitome of Christian meekness (the Easter bunny). May not the Negro, in his conversion to Christianity, have learned the standard Christian animal symbols from the whites? Could not his constant tale-spinning about the Rabbit's malevolent triumphs somehow, in some devious way, suggest the ascent of Christ, the meekness that shall inherit the earth; suggest, even, that the meek may stop being meek and set about inheriting the earth without waiting on the Biblical timetable?

But, there *is* more definite evidence as to Brer Rabbit's non-African origins—skimpy, not conclusive, but highly suggestive. Folklore study indicates that if the Negro did have stories about a rabbit back in Africa, they were not these stories, and the rabbit was most decidedly not this rabbit. Brer Rabbit's truer ancestor, research suggests, hails from elsewhere.

"MOST of these Negro stories," reported a Johns Hopkins ethnologist—one of the "cackling" folklorists— ". . . bear a striking resemblance to the large body of animal stories made on European soil, of which the most extensive is that known as the *Roman de Renard.* The episodes which form the substance of this French version circulated

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in the Middle Ages on the Flemish border. . . . The principal actors . . . are the fox, who plays the jokes, and the wolf, most frequently the victim of the fox."

In incident after incident, the Brer Rabbit situations parallel the Reynard the Fox situations: the same props appear, the same set-to's, the same ruses, the same supporting characters, often the same dialogue. But there is one big difference: "In *Uncle Remus* the parts are somewhat changed. Here the rabbit, who scarcely appears (under the name Couard) in the *Renard,* is the chief trickster. His usual butt is the fox. . . ."

In Christian symbolism, then, the rabbit is the essence of meekness and innocence. And in an important part of white folk culture he stands for the impotent, the cowardly, as against the cunning fox. Suddenly, with the beginning of slavery, the Negro begins to tell stories in which the rabbit, now the epitome of belligerence and guile, crops up as the *hero,* mercilessly badgering the fox.

Could the Negroes have got the Reynard fables from the whites? Not impossible. The stories originated among the Flemish peasants. During the 12th century they were written down in French, Latin, and German, in a variety of rhymed forms. The many written versions were then widely circulated throughout Western Europe. And more than a few of the first Negro slaves were brought to France, Spain, and Portugal; and some of their descendants were transplanted to America. Also, many early slaves were brought to plantations owned by Frenchmen—whether in the Louisiana Territory, the Acadian-French sections of North Carolina, or the West Indies.

And many white masters, of French and other backgrounds, told these delightful fox tales to their children. And, from the beginning of the slave trade, many Negroes—who may or may not have had pre-Christian rabbit fables of their own back in Africa—could have listened, smiling amiably, slowly absorbing the raw materials for the grinning folk "gift" that would one day be immortalized by Joel Chandler Harris, Walt Disney, Tin Pan Alley, and the comics. . . .

The Harris research technique, we learn, was first-hand and direct. Seeing a group of Negroes, he approaches and asks if they know any Brer Rabbit stories. The Negroes seem not to understand. Offhandedly, and in rich dialect, Harris tells one himself—as often as not, the famous "Tar-Baby" story. The Negroes are transfixed; then, suddenly, they break out in peals of laughter, kick their heels together, slap their thighs. Before long they are swapping Rabbit yarns with the white man as though he were their lifelong "hail-feller." "Curiously enough," Harris notes, "I have found few Negroes who will acknowledge to a stranger that they know anything of these legends; and yet to relate one of the stories is the surest road to their confidence and esteem."

Why the sudden hilarity? What magic folk-key causes these wary, taciturn Negroes to open up? Harris claims to have won their "esteem"; but perhaps he only guaranteed them immunity. He thinks he disarmed the Negroes—he may only have demonstrated that he, the white bossman, was disarmed.

And how much did the Negroes tell him when they "opened up"? Just how far did they really open up? Harris observes that "there are different versions of all the stories—the shrewd narrators of the mythology of the old plantation adapting themselves with ready tact to the years, tastes, and expectations of their juvenile audiences." But there seem to be gaps in Harris's own versions. At tantalizingly crucial points Uncle Remus will break off abruptly—"Some tells one tale en some tells nudder"—leaving the story dangling like a radio cliff-hanger. Did these gaps appear when the stories were told to Harris? When the slave is obliged to play the clown-entertainer and "give" his folk tales to his masters, young or old, his keen sense of the fitting might well delete the impermissible and blur the dubious—and more out of self-preservation than tact.

Of course, the original oral stories would not express the slave's aggressions straightforwardly either. A Negro slave who yielded his mind fully to his race hatreds in an absolutely white-dominated situation must go

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mad; and the function of such folk symbols as Brer Rabbit is precisely to prevent inner explosions by siphoning off these hatreds before they can completely possess consciousness. Folk tales, like so much of folk culture, are part of an elaborate psychic drainage system—they make it possible for Uncle Tom to retain his facade of grinning Tomism and even, to some degree, to believe in it himself. But the slave's venom, while subterranean, must nonetheless have been *thrillingly* close to the surface and its symbolic disguises flimsier, its attacks less roundabout. Accordingly his protective instincts, sensing the danger in too shallow symbolism, would have necessarily wielded a meticulous, if unconscious, blue pencil in the stories told to white audiences.

HARRIS tried hard to convince himself that Uncle Remus was a full-fledged, dyed-in-the-denim Uncle Tom—he describes the "venerable sable patron" as an ex-slave "who has nothing but pleasant memories of the discipline of slavery." But Harris could not completely exorcise the menace in the Meek. How often Remus steps out of his clown-role to deliver unmistakeable judgments on class, caste, and race! In those judgments the aggressions of this "white man's nigger" are astonishingly naked.

"Why the Negro Is Black" tells how the little boy makes the "curious" discovery that Remus's palms are white. The old man explains: "Dey wuz a time w'en all de w'ite folks 'us black—blacker dan me. . . . Niggers is niggers now, but de time wuz w'en we 'uz all niggers tergedder. . . ." How did some "niggers" get white? Simply by bathing in a pond which washed their pigmentation off and using up most of the waters, so that the latecomers could only dabble their hands and feet in it.

But the stragglers who were left with their dark skin tone are not trapped—they may be able to wriggle out of it. In "A Plantation Witch," Remus, explaining that there are witches everywhere in the world that "comes en conjus fokes," hints that these witches may be Negroes who have slipped out of their skins. And these witches conjure white folks from all sides, taking on the forms of owls, bats, dogs, cats—and rabbits.

And in "The Wonderful Tar-Baby Story"—advertised on the dust-jacket as the most famous of all the Remus stories—Remus reverts to the question of pigmentation. ("There are few negroes that will fail to respond" to this one, Harris advises one of his folklore "legmen.") The Fox fashions a "baby" out of tar and places it on the side of the road; the Rabbit comes along and addresses the figure. Not getting any answer, he threatens: "Ef you don't take off dat hat en tell me howdy, I'm gwineter bus' you wide open." (Here the Rabbit's bluster reads like a parody of the white man's demand for the proper bowing-and-scraping etiquette from the Negro; it is a reflection of the satiric mimicry of the whites which the slaves often indulged in among themselves.) He hits the Tar-Baby—his fist sticks in the gooey tar. He hits it with the other hand, then kicks it—all four extremities are stuck.

This is "giving" in a new sense; tar, blackness, by its very yielding, traps. Interesting symbol, in a land where the mere possession of a black skin requires you, under penalty of death, to yield, to *give*, everywhere. The mark of supreme impotence suddenly acquires the power to render impotent, merely by its flaccidity, its inertness; it is almost a Gandhi-like symbol. There is a puzzle here: it is the Rabbit who is trapped. But in a later story, "How Mr. Rabbit Was Too Sharp for Mr. Fox," it turns out that the Rabbit, through another cagey maneuver, gets the Fox to set him free from the tar-trap and thus avoids being eaten by his enemy. The Negro, in other words, is wily enough to escape from the engulfing pit of blackness, although his opponents, who set the trap, do their level best to keep him imprisoned in it. But it is not at all sure that anyone else who fell victim to this treacherous black yieldingness—the Fox, say—would be able to wriggle out so easily.

The story about "A Plantation Witch" frightens his young admirer so much that Remus has to take him by the hand and lead

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him home to the "big house." And for a long time the boy lies awake "expecting an unseemly visitation from some mysterious source." Many of the other stories, too, must have given him uneasy nights. For within the "gift" that Uncle Remus gives to Miss Sally's little boy is a nightmare, a nightmare in which whites are Negroes, the Weak torture and drown the Strong, mere blackness becomes black magic—and Negroes cavort with cosmic forces and the supernatural, zipping their skins off at will to prowl around the countryside terrorizing the whites, often in the guise of rabbits. . . .

HARRIS'S career is one of the fabulous success stories of American literary history. Thanks to Uncle Remus, the obscure newspaperman was catapulted into the company of Mark Twain, Bret Harte, James Whitcomb Riley, and Petroleum V. Nasby; Andrew Carnegie and Theodore Roosevelt traveled to Atlanta to seek him out; he was quoted in Congress. And all the while he maintained—as in a letter to Twain—that "my book has no basis in literary merit to stand upon; I know it is the matter and not the manner that has attracted public attention . . . my relations towards Uncle Remus are similar to those that exist between an almanac-maker and the calendar. . . ."

But how was it that Harris could apply his saccharine manner to such matter, dress this malevolent material, these nightmares, in such sweetness and light? For one thing, of course, he was only recording the tottering racial myth of the post-bellum South, doing a paste-job on its fissioning falseface. As it happened, he was peculiarly suited for the job; for he was crammed full of pathological racial obsessions, over and above those that wrack the South and, to a lesser degree, all of white America.

Even Harris's worshipful biographer, his daughter-in-law, can't prevent his story from reading like a psychiatric recital of symptoms. The blush and the stammer were his whole way of life. From early childhood on, we are told, he was "painfully conscious of his social deficiencies" and his "lack of size"; he felt "handicapped by his tendency to stutter" and to "blush furiously," believed himself "much uglier than he really was"; in his own words, he had "an absolute horror of strangers."

During his induction into the typographical union, Harris stutters so badly that he has to be excused from the initiation ceremony; trapped in a room full of congenial strangers, he escapes by jumping out of the window. "What a coarse ungainly boor I am," he laments, "how poor, small and insignificant. . . ." He wonders if he is mad: "I am morbidly sensitive . . . it is an affliction—a disease . . . the slightest rebuff tortures me beyond expression. . . . It is worse than death itself. It is *horrible*." Again, he speculates about his "abnormal quality of mind . . . that lacks only vehemence to become downright insanity. . . ." Harris's life, it appears, was one long ballet of embarrassment.

"I AM nursing a novel in my brain," Harris announced archly more than once. All along he was consumed with the desire to turn out some "long work" of fiction, but, except for two inept and badly received efforts (published after his forty-eighth year), he never succeeded. Over and over he complained bitterly of his grinding life in the journalistic salt mines—but when the Century Company offered him a handsome income if he would devote all his time to creative work, he refused. This refusal, according to his daughter-in-law, "can be explained only by his abnormal lack of confidence in himself as a 'literary man.'"

The urge to create was strong in Harris, so strong that it gave him no peace; and he could not create. That is the central fact in his biography: his creative impulses were trapped behind a block of congealed guilts, granite-strong; the works he produced were not real gushings of the subjective but only those driblets that were able to seep around the edges of the block.

Harris's stammer—his literal choking on words—was like a charade of the novelist *manqué* in him; his blush was the fitful glow of his smothered self, a tic of the guilty blood.

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And that smothered self had a name: Uncle Remus.

Accused of plagiarizing folk materials, Harris replies indignantly: "I shall not hesitate to draw on the oral stories I know for incidents. . . . The greatest literary men, if you will remember, were very poor inventors." Harris all his life was a very poor inventor; his career was built on a merciless, systematic plagiarizing of the folk-Negro. Small wonder, then, that the "plantation darky" was such a provocative symbol for him. For, ironically, this lowly Negro was, when viewed through the blinders of stereotype, almost the walking image of Harris's ego-ideal—the un-selfconscious, "natural," free-flowing, richly giving creator that Harris could never become. Indeed, for Harris, as for many another white American, the Negro *seemed* in every respect to be a negative print of his own uneasy self: "happy-go-lucky," socializing, orally expressive, muscularly relaxed, never bored or passive, unashamedly exhibitionistic, free from self-pity even in his situation of concentrated pain, emotionally fluid. And every time a Remus opened his mouth, every time he flashed a grin, he wrote effortlessly another novel that was strangled a-borning in Harris.

"I despise and detest those false forms of society that compel people to suppress their thoughts," Harris wrote. But he was himself the most inhibited and abashed of men. What fascinates him in the Rabbit stories, he confesses, is "the humor that lies between *what is perfectly decorous in appearance* and *what is wildly extravagant in suggestion.*" But, a thorough slave to decorum, he was incapable of the "wildly extravagant," whether in his love-making ("My love for you," he informs his future wife, "is . . . far removed from that wild passion that develops itself in young men in their teens . . . it is not at all wild or unreasoning.") or in his writing.

HARRIS, then, was *awed* by Uncle Remus. It was the awe of the sophisticate before the spontaneous, the straitjacketed before the nimble. But was the Negro what Harris thought him to be? It is certainly open to question, for another irony of the South is that the white man, under his pretense of racial omniscience, actually knows the Negro not at all—he knows only the false-face which he has forced on the Negro. It is the white man who manufactures the Negro grin. The stereotype reflects the looker, his thwartings and yearnings, not the person looked at; it is born out of intense subjective need.

Harris's racial awe was only an offshoot of the problem that tormented him all his life: the problem of identifying himself. He was caught in the American who-am-I dilemma, one horn of which is white, the other often black. And there is abundant proof that, at least in one compartment of his being, Harris defined himself by identifying with the Negro.

As a child, Harris started the game of "Gully Minstrels" with his white playmates; and later in life, whenever he felt "blue" and wanted to relax, he would jump up and exclaim, "Let's have some fun—let's play minstrels!" Often, in letters and newspaper articles, and even in personal relations, he would *jokingly* refer to himself as "Uncle Remus," and when he started a one-man magazine, he decided to name it *Uncle Remus's Magazine* instead of *The Optimist*! Frequently he would lapse into a rich Negro dialect, to the delight of his admirers, from Andrew Carnegie down to the local trolley conductor. And, like Uncle Remus, he even toys with the idea that whites are only blanched Negroes: "Study a nigger right close," he has one of his characters say, "and you'll ketch a glimpse of how white folks would look and do without their trimmin's."

Harris seems to have been a man in permanent rebellion against his own skin. No wonder: for he was driven to "give," and it was impossible for him to give without first zipping out of his own decorous skin and slipping into Uncle Remus's. To him the artist and the Negro were synonymous.

And Harris virulently *hated* the Negro, too. "The colored people of Macon," he writes in his paper, "celebrated the birthday

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of Lincoln again on Wednesday. This is the third time since last October. . . ." And: "A negro pursued by an agile Macon policeman fell in a well the other day. He says he knocked the bottom out of the concern." Again: "There will have to be another amendment to the civil rights bill. A negro boy in Covington was attacked by a sow lately and narrowly escaped with his life. We will hear next that the sheep have banded together to mangle the downtrodden race."

The malice here is understandable. Can the frustrate—the "almanac-maker"—ever love unequivocally the incarnation of his own taboo self—the "calendar"? What stillborn novelist can be undilutedly tender towards the objectivization of his squelched alter-ego, whose oral stories he feels impelled to "draw on" all his life?

Most likely, at least in Harris, the love went deeper than the hate—the hate was, in some measure, a *defense* against the love. *"Some goes up en some goes down."* Who sings this theme song? A trio: the Rabbit, Remus, *and* Harris. Literally, it is only a rabbit and a fox who change places. Racially, the song symbolizes the ascent of the Negro "Weak" and the descent of the white "Strong."

But to Harris, on the deepest personal level, it must have meant: the collapse of the "perfectly decorous" (inhibition, etiquette, embarrassment, the love that is never wild, the uncreative journalist-compiler, the blush and the stammer) and the triumph of the "wildly extravagant" (spontaneity, "naturalness," the unleashed subjective, creativity, "Miss Meadows en de gals," exhibitionism, the folk-novelist). The song must have been *deliciously* funny to him. . . .

THE Remus stories are a monument to the South's ambivalence. Harris, the archetypical Southerner, sought the Negro's love, and pretended he had received it (Remus's grin). But he sought the Negro's hate too (Brer Rabbit), and revelled in it in an unconscious orgy of masochism—punishing himself, possibly, for not being the Negro, the stereotypical Negro, the unstinting giver.

Harris's inner split—and the South's, and white America's—is mirrored in the fantastic disparity between Remus's beaming face and Brer Rabbit's acts. And such aggressive acts increasingly emanate from the grin, along with the hamburgers, the shoeshines, the "happifyin'" pancakes.

Today Negro attack and counter-attack becomes more straightforward. The NAACP submits a brief to the United Nations, demanding a redress of grievances suffered by the Negro people at the hands of white America. The election newsreels showed Henry Wallace addressing audiences that were heavily sprinkled with Negroes, protected by husky, alert, *deadpan* bodyguards—Negroes. New York Negroes voted for Truman—but only after Truman went to Harlem. The Gandhi-like "Tar-Baby" begins to stir: Grant Reynolds and A. Phillips Randolph, announcing to a Senate committee that they will refuse to be drafted in the next war, revealed, at the time, that many Negroes were joining their civil-disobedience organization—the first movement of passive resistance this country had seen.

Increasingly Negroes themselves reject the mediating smile of Remus, the indirection of the Rabbit. The present-day animated cartoon hero, Bugs Bunny, is, like Brer Rabbit, the meek suddenly grown cunning—but without Brer Rabbit's facade of politeness. "To pull a Bugs Bunny," meaning to spectacularly outwit someone, is an expression not infrequently heard in Harlem.

There is today on every level a mass repudiation of "Uncle Tomism." Significantly the Negro comedian is disappearing. For bad or good, the *Dark Laughter* that Sherwood Anderson heard all around white New Orleans is going or gone.

The grin is faltering, especially since the war. That may be one of the reasons why, once more, the beaming Negro butler and Pullman porter are making their amiable way across our billboards, food labels, and magazine ads—and Uncle Remus, "fetchin' a grin from year to year," is in the bigtime again.

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MERMAID

A Story

NATHAN HALPER

WHEN Cellini was about five his father chanced to see a creature like a lizard playing in the middle of the fire. He realized what it was and, calling the boy to him, brought it to his attention.

This done, he gave him a great box on his ear. After which, he kissed him.

"My little boy," he said, "I am not striking you for any wrong you have done, but to make you remember that there is a salamander, a thing which has never been seen before by anyone!"

Anatole France has a story much like the above. A few of the details vary. For instance, the salamander—it is a woman, a Nymph, "of a perfect beauty." Nonetheless, the pattern of his story is the same.

As he tells it, a gentleman once called Jacques to the hearth. Bidding him look above the flames, he asked him if he could see a resemblance to a woman. As the smoke curled, its curves might be said to simulate a female body. The lad, not entirely lying, replied that—maybe—he was able to see something. Hearing this, the other fetched him a huge buffet on the shoulder. "My dear child," he said, "it was necessary to make a strong impression on you—so that you may never forget that you have seen a salamander."

"'Tis a sign," he added, "that you are destined to become a philosopher!"

GRANDPA and I had a similar experience. We were out in a rowboat.

Like the old-timers used to, Grandpa kept his hat on. His jacket too. It was a hot day. Yet he wouldn't loosen his coat. Wouldn't undo a single button.

He was rowing in such a way that he faced the way we headed. The derby lay square on his head. There was no tilt to it at all.

Grandpa sat bolt upright, practically on the edge of the seat. As a matter of fact, he sat the way he used to sit when he would drive his buggy.

We were half a mile from shore when he began to idle, moving the oars just enough so that the boat would not drift.

The waves were slow and rather small. Suddenly, there was one that was of a medium size. In the trough behind it, I saw a tiny mermaid.

She had button breasts, like a little girl's. The lower part of the body was like a mackerel's.

She was very much at her ease.

She saw me; she smiled; then she wrinkled her nose. Then—in a couple of seconds—a wave carried her away.

"Grandpa," I said. "I saw a mermaid."

Grandpa stopped his rowing.

"I did!" I said.

He took the oars from the locks.

"I did!" I said.

Grandpa took his hat off. He laid it on the seat beside him. He took his coat off; he sat there in his vest. After this, he rolled up his sleeves. He had to remove the cuff-links before he did so. After that, Grandpa spit into the cup of his right hand.

I knew he was leading up to something. As I wondered what this could be, Grandpa rubbed his palm. Then he hauled off, and he smacked me across my mouth.

"Son!" he said. "If I hit you, I did it because I had to fix it in your mind. . . . You

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NATHAN HALPER was born in Manhattan in 1907 and received his AB from Columbia University in 1927. His sketch, "The Card Player: His Rise and Fall," appeared in the September 1947 COMMENTARY.

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saw a mermaid. And there is no such thing!"

I AM a grandpa now.

As such, I have an urge to say a few wise words.

I had meant to say words of wisdom to my children. Before they began school. Before they finished it. . . . Before adolescence. . . . Before they got a job. . . . Before they fell in love. . . .

Things would happen too fast.

I meant to draw a map. But, while I was thinking of it—the travelers flew past.

It is different now.

I have a grandson. . . . I have the time.

So, last night I was thinking of my grandson. I was trying to frame the words, the sage words I was going to say.

This was not easy.

Any time I thought of a truth, I thought of a reservation. The more I thought, the worse it got. Any time I saw a truth, I saw that, to some degree, its opposite was also true. The map became like a maze. My guide-to-life got as involved as life itself was.

Yet I knew there was something, something I had for the boy. It was alive. I could feel it. It would gallop up to the very tip of my tongue. Then, whenever I tried to put a bit of salt on its tail, it would scamper back to the deep caves of my mind.

And, as if to make it harder, I began to see my grandpa.

I saw him take his hat off. I saw him take his coat off. I felt his palm across my mouth. The veins on his freckled hands were the color of his eyes.

I felt his palm against my mouth. "You saw a mermaid," he said. "And there is no such thing!"

"You saw a mermaid," he said. "And . . . there is no such thing!"

Grandpa's words suddenly came into a new importance. All these years, they had been only a detail of the episode. I saw, suddenly, that they had been its heart.

Oh, how foolish I had been! I saw that the worst mistakes I had ever made in my life I would have avoided if I had only understood him.

There were times when I would think that I had really seen a mermaid. I would forget then that they did not exist. There were times when I would think that a mermaid did not exist. . . . I'd forget that I had seen one.

I saw why my grandpa had been edging into my mind while I was thinking of my grandson.

His thought was the thought I had been trying to get.

THE words—I had them now. The words I would tell my grandson.

Yet—yet—

What good will they do him?

I—I had seen a mermaid. I had been with my grandpa. He had taken forceful steps. He had hit me; then he spoke, impressing his words upon my mind. I remembered them all my life.

What good did it do? What good did it do me?

I did not get his point. Fifty years had passed before I got his meaning. I learned it by myself, wholly apart from any action he had taken, any words that he had said. That is the way that my grandson will learn it too.

Grandpa—surely he had known that his words were of no use.

Why did he bother to speak?

Finally—I saw it. The lag of fifty years—that was the point of the affair. He was not reading a homily. He was giving a greeting.

He was sending it into the future.

Grandpa—

He had touched my sleeve. Fifty years later, I would feel it. He had moved his lips. Fifty years later, I would see them.

He had said, "Hello." Fifty years later, I would hear him—

"Hello," I said. "Hello, my grandpa!"

I WILL do the same.

The boy will see a mermaid. It may be a salamander. But I feel, I really feel, it is going to be a mermaid.

I think I will like it best if it happens in a rowboat.

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"Grandpa," he will say. "Grandpa—I saw a mermaid!"

He will repeat it. "I did!"

"I did." And when he does, I am going to hit him. . . . I won't want to. I'll be shy. But—I will have to.

And—as I do—I will feel it again. I will feel my grandpa's bony hand on my mouth.

And, from fifty years in the past, I will hear his voice.

"Hello," he'll say. "Hello, my grandson!"

As for the boy, the boy is going to sniffle.

I have watched him when he's hit. He tries not to cry. But he gives a little whimper.

Then he sniffles three, four times.

So—he is going to sniffle. But, as he does, I will hear a voice. A voice out of the future. Fifty years into the future. . . . I'll hear my grandson's voice.

"Hello," he is going to say.

"Hello, my grandpa!"

COMMENCEMENT

MILTON KAPLAN

ANOINTED by benediction and released,
They sway out slowly to recessional,
And buoyant in the music and their loose
Symbolic gowns, they float on waves of warm
Applause and merge into the waiting crowd.
Caught by the fitful currents of farewell,
They swirl in random drifts, their restless hands
Stretched out elastically for outstretched hands,
Clinging with all their memory to friends
Once-strangers, who loom darkly into strangers
Once-friends; twining and intertwining hands
And ears and eyes in fluid arabesque
Of parting, grasping tentacles of words
With frightened suction-wish, unwinding, winding
Their memories until the campus heaves
With undulating longing, and they spin
Around in whirlpools of uncertainty,
And break centrifugally from contact, whirl
And come to rest, their severed tentacles
Writhing with heartless life, and weak with wound,
They yield to each successive wave, and cross
The final line of foam-indented Past
To gasp upon the empty shore of loss.

MILTON KAPLAN's poetry has appeared in *Poetry*, the *New Republic*, *Partisan Review*, and a number of other magazines. His poem "Moving-Picture Show" appeared in COMMENTARY February 1949. Mr. Kaplan was born in New York City in 1910 and now teaches English at Textile High School.

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THE MYTH OF THE PARASITIC MIDDLEMAN

"Productive" and "Unproductive" Labor

ABBA P. LERNER

PARASITE, leech, vampire, symbol of unproductiveness and irresponsibility —these are familiar terms for that classic modern villain: the middleman. How often have we heard him thrust into the social darkness in company with the whole rogues' gallery of liberalism's enemies! Yet his case deserves review and reappraisal. He should be judged before being condemned.

The charge is well known: the middleman is nothing but a go-between. He is a trader who does not produce anything. He buys goods from the producer and sells them to the consumer at a profit; he is therefore an excrescence on the body economic, the profiteer, the "exploiter" *par excellence.*

The charge rests on a distinction between the "productiveness" of work and the "unproductiveness" of trade. But on what is this distinction based—apart from confused thinking?

Consider, for example, the question of the so-called "gray market," which was recently blamed for encouraging inflation. A moment's thought will serve to make one realize that the "gray marketeers" performed a useful social function; they broke through monopolistic practices and supplied vital materials like steel, sorely needed to keep vital productive processes going, which could not be obtained by any other means. Is it not perhaps because we are uneasily aware of this that we changed the color from black to gray?

Yet even the middlemen themselves plead guilty: often they are the first to deprecate their own social usefulness, to admit that they are parasites who not merely fail to do their fair share of work but are actually engaged in socially harmful activities.

In many cases, especially where Jews are prominently engaged in such trade, the attack on the middleman is nothing but a disguised form of anti-Semitism. All the more is it to be deplored, then, that Jews themselves tend to accept such ideas, as is shown, for instance, in the special pride Zionists take in Jewish manual laborers and Jewish farmers, and in the parroting in Zionist ideology of the condemnation of the trader's role as parasitic.

This apologetic attitude is quite uncalled for. Viewed from a fundamental standpoint, the work of the middleman or trader has more than ordinary usefulness: it consists in facilitating a socially desirable movement of things from one place to another. The trader buys something in one place for less than he can sell it for in another. That the commodity is dearer in the second place simply indicates that it is needed there more. The middleman, therefore, moves things from where they are needed less to where they are needed more.

AT LEAST since the 18th century, social discontent has tended to focus on the figure of The Middleman, who is conceived to be a kind of parasite earning his living in some obscure way at the expense of the "productive" elements of society. This conception of the parasitic role of the trader has played an important part in political movements of the Left and the Right, both on a popular and on a high ideological level, and has often been used as a basis for anti-Semitism, because of the special economic position of the Jews. ABBA P. LERNER, one of America's leading economists, here subjects this doctrine to a careful analysis. Dr. Lerner is a member of the faculty of Roosevelt College, and is a founder and one of the editors of the *Review of Economic Studies.* He was born in Bessarabia in 1903, and earned his doctorate at the London School of Economics. His book *The Economics of Control* is a standard work in the field.

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One may object that there is no absolute certainty that the higher price really indicates any such thing; it may merely show that the buyers in the place to which the goods are moved have more money to spend. Thus the middleman might actually be taking goods away from poor people, who have a greater need for these goods, and selling them to rich people, who need them less. But the opposite is equally possible; the middleman may be taking goods from rich people and bringing them to poor people. (After all, more goods are sold to poor people than to rich people—there are so many more poor people.) In that case he is not only moving goods to where they are appreciated more—the basic benefit that results when goods are shifted between equally rich or equally poor consumers—but he is also moving goods from those who can spare them more easily to those who are in greater need of them.

Indeed, any general examination of the middleman's activities must begin by disregarding his shuttlings between rich and poor. Inequality of wealth and income is a separate problem, for which the middleman has no special responsibility. Properly understood, such inequality is merely a complicating factor in the middleman's activities, sometimes swelling and sometimes diminishing the social value of these activities. When he moves goods from poor to rich, the benefit is cut down; when the movement is in the other direction, the benefit is of course increased. Yet these variations cancel out on the whole, leaving the basic benefit of goods being shifted from where consumers are willing to pay less to places where they are willing to pay more; and this still means that, given the existing distribution of income and wealth, they are being moved from where they are wanted less to where they are wanted more.

Now it is common for people to understand and accept the foregoing analysis and then, nevertheless, repeat the old accusation: the middleman does not "produce" anything. He "merely" moves things from one place to another.

Those who persist in making this statement have overlooked something both obvious and startling. For what we have defined as the peculiarity of the middleman—that his activity consists in moving things from one place to another—is actually true of all economic activity. *All* the "real" or "direct" production with which the middleman's activity is unfavorably contrasted boils down to exactly the same thing.

Workers cannot create material things; they can only manipulate materials that already exist. A worker moves coal from the face of the mine to the truck which takes it away; he moves it on the truck from the mine face to the mine shaft, from below ground to above ground, from the coal-producing area to the homes and factories where it is needed. The farmer moves small pieces of earth with spade or plow; he moves fertilizer to where it is needed; he moves seeds from his bins to his fields; and, finally, he moves the ripe crops from the field to the barn. The automobile worker moves one piece of metal to join it on to another piece and moves the screws so that they hold tight. The textile worker draws cotton or wool into threads, or arranges the threads so that they are entangled with each other to form cloth or joined with other pieces of thread to form suits and dresses and shirts.

Thus, since all work can be reduced to "shifting dirt from one place to another," there can be no *physical* way of distinguishing between productive and unproductive occupations. Only one significant test exists: whether the results are *useful*—how much they contribute to the needs and desires of human beings.

The popular distinction between the middleman and the workers is part of a long series of attempts to distinguish "productive" from "unproductive" occupations. Two centuries ago, the Physiocrats in France, the grandfathers of modern economics, asserted that only the land and the people working on it were truly productive. Agriculture, they said, produces crops, while manufacture is not truly productive because it merely

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changes the form of what the land yields.

For Adam Smith, the father of modern economic theory, artisans as well as farmers were productive, provided that they produced a palpable physical commodity. Builders, tailors, engineers were productive workers because when they completed their work they had a house or a suit of clothes or a bridge to testify to their productiveness. On the other hand, a musician, a lawyer, a singer, or a professor would be classed as "unproductive," since he could not point to any "solid" product of his labor.

In more recent times, most Marxists have insisted that only labor is productive and that capital goods and land, although they are as essential to production as labor, are not. And according to some Marxists, even more than normally careless, only the unskilled labor of a kind of "pure proletariat" is *really* productive all the way through; the more skilled workers are tainted with an element of exploitativeness, especially if they are managers of production.

The original distinction between "productive" and "unproductive" labor was not drawn in order to praise the one and denigrate the other. The Physiocrats stressed the productiveness of the soil because they wanted to concentrate taxation on the land owners and to take it out of rent. Their basic principle was a sound one: namely, that taxes should be imposed on those elements of income which are a "surplus" in a rather special sense, and they isolated a sector of unearned income that was especially suitable for such taxation. And Adam Smith, too, made it very clear that the labor he called "unproductive" could be of the utmost importance to society. His distinction was made only to demarcate those activities which could result in additions to the accumulated *wealth* of nations. Such additions are possible only from activity that results in a *durable* physical product. The man who provides a service that must be consumed immediately may be doing something much more useful and important than one who turns out a physical product. His activity may raise the standard of living or provide the basic security without which life would be impossible. (The services of a physician would be a case in point.) But since he does not *directly* produce any tangible addition to society's wealth, Adam Smith singles out his work as "unproductive."

The Marxists, however, do use the distinction between "productive" and "unproductive" activity as a basis for praise or blame. They have to admit that the output of useful goods and services is increased by the use of land and capital and by the skill of entrepreneurs and managers of production, but the admission is offered reluctantly and phrased in a peculiar language that seems to withdraw the admission. These other factors, they say rather vaguely and lamely, only "make it possible for labor to produce more." Yet as a description of what actually happens, there is not the slightest difference between saying that land and capital contribute to the final product and saying that land and capital help labor to be more productive. If more capital or more land is used with a given amount of labor, there will be a greater product, just as certainly as when more labor is applied to a given supply of capital and land.

The Marxists insisted with such violence on labor's being the only "productive" force because they wished to harness the workers' sense of property rights to the revolution: if the workers were the only "real" producers, then the product was by right completely theirs; if landlords and capitalists got anything at all out of the productive and distributive process, then they must in some hidden way be stealing it from its rightful owners. Many Marxists have been moved by this picture of capitalist pilfering to heights of proprietory passion that never could have come from a mere consideration of the desirability of social change. But however effective it may be for the purpose of kindling revolutionary fervor to emphasize the "productiveness" of wage-labor, the distinction simply does not hold in any scientific analysis of how the economy actually works.

Sometimes the worker and the middleman

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are differentiated on the ground that one works for wages and the other for profit. Wages are then regarded as honorific, whereas profit is given a dishonorable connotation associated with the idea that it involves the exploitation of others. Part of the disesteem for profits comes from the ethical conception of a special selfishness in seeking profits—production should be "for use and not for profit." But why it is more selfish to work for profits than for wages is impossible to say. In both cases, personal gain is the incentive, and in neither is the motive pure patriotism or love of one's neighbors. Morally they are exactly on a par, and we are always driven back to the ultimate criterion of social usefulness.

The refusal to recognize the proper place of land and capital in economic accounting was one of the reasons for the terrible fall of productivity in Russia in the first few years after the 1917 revolution. The restoration of a limited free market under the New Economic Policy in 1921 resulted in a rapid improvement until 1928—the best consumers' year since the Revolution. After 1928 the market was outlawed, and the state planning organization minimized the importance of the productivity of land and capital in its accounting. This move away from free market mechanisms contributed in a significant measure to the decline in living standards that has been going on since then. The inefficiency arising from failure to utilize proper market and pricing procedures is revealed in part by the frequent admissions of wasteful results in Soviet discussions of accounting methods, but most of all by the fact that even the most stringent prohibition of trading by middlemen—called "speculators"—has been insufficient to prevent this illegal activity completely.

This brings us back to the essential usefulness of the middleman, or "speculator," in carrying goods (even though for profit) from where they are less urgently needed to where they are more urgently needed. In fact, a closer examination shows that the "speculator" can be *more* certain of his social usefulness than the "productive" worker.

The worker is normally engaged in turning a less useful thing, steel, into a more useful thing, an automobile. But there is no guarantee that the steel might not be needed for some other purpose even more urgently than for the automobile. The output of some alternative product, say locomotives, may be restricted below what is socially desirable even as indicated by the money demand. In a capitalist society, this may be because a monopoly does this in order to keep up the price. In a socialist society, it may be the result of bad planning. In all such cases the automobile worker plays an innocent but none the less harmful role in turning a more useful thing—steel which is needed for locomotives—into a less useful thing—automobiles. Thus the worker can never be sure that what he is doing is really useful even relative to the money demand for the products as affected by the given distribution of income and wealth.*

The trader-speculator-middleman does not suffer from this handicap. If he buys goods in one town because he can sell them at a higher price in another town, there can be no doubt that they are wanted more in the place he carries them to than in the place he fetches them from. Thus, what he does is always socially useful; if it were not, he would be unable to make any profit. This extremely high productivity and usefulness

* This is quite apart from the possibility that the worker might be participating in producing something to satisfy a rich man's whim instead of something to satisfy some poor man's urgent necessity. Such distortion in the use of resources is the result of inequality in income and wealth and is the exact parallel to the possibility that the middleman might be shifting resources from the poor to the rich. Just as in that case, this possibility must be balanced against the opposite possibility that the worker is engaged in producing for the poor when he might be producing for the rich. And again, like the middleman, the worker is not the one to blame for excessive inequalities of income and wealth. So long as labor and the other resources are being directed toward that product for which more money is being offered, the worker is engaged in turning less wanted goods into more wanted goods *relative to the given distribution of income and wealth*—just like the middleman.

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of the middleman is attested to by his being able to survive in spite of all sorts of restrictions on his activities. The small Jewish traders, moving about from village to village or from town to town through the centuries, knew only too well how multifold and ingenious these restrictions could be. Yet they always overcame them. Indeed, according to some, it was the scorned activities of such traders in the Middle Ages that made possible the beginnings of modern capitalism and the development of modern industry and modern standards of living.

Nowhere is the special usefulness of the middleman seen more clearly than in Russia, where his activities are prohibited by law. The trader who buys screws or nails or other such small items in one Russian town and sells them in another at a profit, has to brave severe punishment for "speculation." Yet his work is probably as productive as that of any worker in Russia. Many a huge Russian factory has had to curtail its work because it could not get some small items; and for these to be obtained by the regular bureaucratic methods would take an unconscionably long time. The trader who illegally transports these small but essential items is performing a service of the highest importance in keeping the wheels of industry turning. Nevertheless, his critics claim that he is "exploiting" the workers when he makes a profit.

The condemnation of such useful trading as "speculation" rests on a confusion between two different kinds of activity which unfortunately have been given the same name—speculation. The kind of trading discussed above may be called *competitive* speculation, to distinguish it from *monopolistic* speculation. Monopolistic speculation consists in *creating* scarcities and thus causing prices to rise to the speculator's profit. Sometimes this is done by *destroying* goods in order to sell the remainder at higher prices. But much more important even than this destruction, since it occurs more frequently and on a larger scale, is the harm done in creating scarcity simply by limiting production. The greater part of the evil done by the monopolistic speculator thus lies not in what he takes out of the social product for himself, but in the part he destroys (mainly by preventing its production) in order to be able to take a larger share of what remains. As a result, the rest of society is doubly impoverished—first by what the monopolist takes for himself and again by the reduction in the total output.

This kind of speculation cannot be carried on by the ordinary middleman. It involves an extensive control over productive resources, for without this control it is impossible to bring about artificial scarcity and the concomitant higher prices. The competitive speculator—the middleman—has no such powers. He cannot influence prices, for he is too small in relation to the total market; on the contrary, he must accept the prevailing prices. His activity can therefore only be the moving of goods from where he finds them cheap to where he finds them dear, to the net benefit of society.

It is true, of course, that the economy could not live if everybody were a middleman and nobody engaged in direct production. But neither could the economy live if everybody became a coal miner or if everybody became a farmer.

It is also true that if there were a very good distribution of goods and services between different places and between different dates, and if this were brought about by a social authority without the use of middlemen, then there would not be much for middlemen to do. But this does not mean that middlemen should be discouraged or restricted. It only means that the authorities should try to bring about such a perfect distribution that the middlemen would be unnecessary. A perfect distribution would show itself in balanced prices throughout the economy. The middlemen would then not be able to find any places where goods were relatively plentiful and cheap or where they were relatively scarce and dear. To have such a perfect distribution of goods would of course be a good thing, quite apart from its effects in diminishing the need

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for middlemen and setting them free for other useful activities. But so long as middlemen can make a living by competitive speculation, this stands as proof of an insufficiently perfect distribution, and shows that they have not been rendered unnecessary.

The fact that middlemen would not be needed if distribution were perfect is no more significant than the fact that plumbers would not be needed if pipes never leaked. In actuality our water and gas pipes are not perfect and we do suffer from leaks. Yet no one supposes that the plumbing situation would be improved by decrying the usefulness of plumbers and imposing restrictions on their activity in repairing the leaks that do occur. If we don't want plumbers and middlemen, then let us improve the quality of piping and the efficiency of goods distribution so that plumbers and middlemen will find little to do and will be available for other jobs. The man-hours needed for all sorts of operations are continually being reduced by increased efficiency and technological advances, and they would be reduced still further by the abolition of "featherbedding" practices. The ultimate in mechanization is presumably the complete elimination of the need for work, altogether. Yet nobody has argued that this proves that workers are useless members of society.

THE question of the social role of the middleman has been complicated by a general tendency to take him as the prototype of the *middle class* and to confuse the two.

This confusion might not be thought to matter very much because traders mostly *are* members of the middle class, occupying a place somewhere in the middle of the social hierarchy. It is, nevertheless, of importance to maintain a distinction between middlemen and the middle class, because the social usefulness of each is of quite a different nature. Middlemen are useful economically while the middle class is useful politically and sociologically.

The middle class includes not only the trader-middlemen-speculators, but also professional people, white-collar workers, highly skilled workers, and managers and specialists of various kinds—all who are neither at the top nor the bottom of the hierarchy of wealth, status, and power, but somewhere in the middle. Useful as the middleman may be in improving the efficiency of the economy, and more certain though his usefulness may be in comparison with other groups of workers, the importance of the middle class for the maintenance of a good and free society is of a much higher order.

The middleman's function is to bring together the producer and the consumer. Those who do not understand his usefulness sometimes conceive of him as *separating* producers from consumers rather than joining them together, much as one might say that the mortar in a wall separates the bricks rather than joining them to each other. Actually, of course, what makes the wall stand is the way the mortar holds the bricks together. In the same way, the middle class, lying between the people below it and the people above it, performs the vital function of joining them together.

Although I have dealt here principally with the economics of the middleman, a similar analysis of the political and social roles of the middle class would seem to show that, by providing a continuous line of possible progress from the bottom to the top, a middle class tends to diminish the contrast between the extremes.

With the growth of the middle class, those who do not have a fair share in the privileges and advantages of society may have some hope for improvement and for an enlargement of such opportunities. This hope gives them the ground for interest in the general operation of the economy and in the organization of society. Moreover, they acquire a sense of responsibility for those parts of the social order which are of general utility and are not merely means for granting privileges to chosen minorities. They have a stake in the society—they have something more than their chains to lose—and this fact is of enormous importance: it

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means that their discontent can be harnessed to improve society rather than to destroy it, and that social changes are more likely to be of a kind which really benefit the great mass of the people.

A comparison of England, where there has been a strong middle class for centuries, with Germany, where the middle class was weak and had been ruined by the inflation, makes this point immediately clear. The Nazi movement was built on the mass support of those who had nothing to lose. Where everybody sees opportunities for improvement and development, for himself, for his children, and for the members of society as a whole, the existing order does not appear wholly bad. There is less likelihood of blind revolutionary action, leaving the future entirely to unexamined and mystical benefits which are supposed to follow automatically from a complete destruction of the existing order. People are able to observe the agreement of experience with reason in showing that such blind action ultimately results in a situation worse than the one it replaces.

A strong and growing middle class assures the degree of social mobility and social responsibility that is necessary for real progress. True, the special weaknesses of the middle class played an important part in helping the demagogues of fascism and Communism to hypnotize the hopelessly dispossessed with their deceptive slogans. Yet where there is a *strong* middle class, with social mobility, social responsibility, and the resulting social cohesion, there is always a much greater chance for an even wider distribution of social benefits without the sacrifice of freedom.

CHAGALL: ON A RETROSPECTIVE EXHIBIT

ALLEN KANFER

THIS is the testimony in his hand
To Song of Songs: my bride say after me,
"Bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh," my love,
And let the fiddlers skip across the roofs
To celebrate the wedding, fiddling as
They go.

Come forth, good villagers, and stand
Before the canopy. The houses lean
A little tipsy, and the bride is in the sky,
Is on the earth, harmonics of the fiddles reach
About the corners of the houses. Cantor,
Sing arias in colors, hallel sing.
Desire is blessed, the tranquil privacy.
The bride's sweet earthly gift of self. Weave brush,
Weave color, rooster, fish and kid, the roots,
Tradition rooted in a ripened love.

ARISE, my love, my fair one, come away,
Forever love is in the master's brush,
Forever love is in the master's love.

ALLEN KANFER has studied English literature at Washington University in St. Louis and at New York University. At present he is teaching English at the Grover Cleveland high school in Queens. He has published poetry in the *Menorah Journal, Harper's,* and a number of other publications.

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THE VINDICTIVE AND THE MERCIFUL

God of Wrath and God of Love

MILTON HIMMELFARB

I USED to think I was fooling my father, but now I suspect that he knew all along and did not want to make an issue of it. When I was about sixteen or seventeen, I no longer went to synagogue every Sabbath, as I had done when I was a child. Left to myself I would probably not have gone at all; but I was not left to myself, and I went with my father on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, and occasionally on other holy days as well. I still go. When the time came and I could have stayed away, I discovered I did not want to.

My father prays from his prayer book, but I read from mine. If you read more than you pray, you are left with a good deal of time. Skipping repeated matter, for example, represents a very considerable saving. In addition, experience and temperament lead to the establishment of some fruitful principles of exclusion; thus, it has been many years since I last read liturgical poetry in which the verses are set down according to an acrostic or alphabetic pattern. (Sometimes I am astonished by the number of pages this eliminates.) It did not take me long to realize that I could carefully read everything in the prayer book that appealed to me in about half the time a respectable person is expected to remain in the synagogue. This meant that the prayer book had to be supplemented.

WHEN it first became clear that the *Mahzor* was not enough to see me through, I recognized that I would not have a wide range of choice for additional reading.

The language would have to be Hebrew—out of an obscure sense of the fitness of things, and the ignoble calculation that only Hebrew might not arrest my father's casual glance. The same sense of the fitness of things dictated that the reading should have a certain loftiness of spirit, and even of form. In the course of the years since then my personal canon has come to include the Bible and post-Biblical poetry. Two years ago I added a new volume, a collection by the Israeli writer and scholar S. J. Agnon, entitled *The Days of Awe: A Book of Usages, Homilies and Parables for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur and the Intervening Days.* It is a fascinating book. (The publishers, Schocken Books, have lately issued an abridged edition of this book in an English translation by Jacob Sloan.)

Last Yom Kippur I came upon this selection, entitled "The Reckoning," and taken by Agnon from a Hasidic work, *Marvelous Tales of the Great Men of Israel:* "Once, on the eve of Yom Kippur, the holy Rabbi Elimelech of Lisinsk, of blessed memory, said to his disciples: 'Is it your desire to know how one should act on the eve of Yom Kippur? Go to the tailor who lives on the outskirts of the city.'

"They went to him and stood before the window of his house. They saw him and his sons praying with simplicity, like all tailors. After the prayer they put on Sabbath raiment and lit candles and prepared a table full of good things and sat down to the table in great joy. The tailor took out of a chest a book in which were written all the trans-

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IT IS a time-honored custom to counterpose the Christian "God of Love" and the Jewish "God of Wrath." Does this sharp contrast have any valid relation to the realities of the two religions in doctrine and practice? MILTON HIMMELFARB is a graduate of the College of the City of New York and has studied at the Sorbonne and at the Seminary College of Jewish Studies in New York. He was born in New York in 1918 and is now on the staff of the American Jewish Committee.

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gressions that he had committed during the year, from one Yom Kippur to the next, and said: 'Lord of the world, today the time has come to make a reckoning between us of all the transgressions that we have committed, for it is a time of atonement for all Israel.' At once he began to reckon and enumerate all the transgressions that he had committed in the course of the year, for they were all written down in this account book. After he had finished the reckoning of transgressions, he took out a book larger and heavier than the first and said: 'Having counted the transgressions I have committed, now I shall count the transgressions Thou hast committed.'

"Then he reckoned the sorrow and afflictions, the troubles and anguish and sickness and loss of money that during the course of the year had befallen him and the members of his family. When he had finished the reckoning he said: 'Lord of the world, if we are indeed to reckon with equity, Thou owest me more than I owe Thee; but I do not wish to be exact with Thee in an exact reckoning, for behold, today is the eve of the Day of Atonement and we must all be reconciled with our fellows; we therefore forgive Thee all the transgressions that Thou hast committed against us, and do Thou likewise forgive us all the transgressions wherewith we have transgressed against Thee.' He poured brandy into his glass and said the blessing 'by Whose word all things have their being,' and said in a loud voice: '*Lehayim,* Lord of the world! We hereby mutually forgive all our transgressions against each other; and all of them, whether ours or Thine, are null and void, as though they had never been.' Afterwards they ate and drank with great joy.

"The disciples returned to their master and told him everything they had seen and heard. And they said that the words of the tailor were harsh words and excessive effrontery against heaven. But their master said to them: 'Know that the Holy One, blessed be He, in His glory and essence, and the whole host of heaven come to listen to the tailor's words, which are spoken in great simplicity; and from his words are created grace and joy in all the worlds.'"

As I read this story, I was reminded of something I had read recently in *Medieval Panorama,* by the late G. G. Coulton, the eminent British medievalist. Coulton is examining the effects on Christian theology of a literal reliance on the Old Testament, and he does not find them good: "[St. Thomas Aquinas] decides definitely that the joy of the Blessed in Heaven will be increased by the sight of the Damned wallowing beneath, in a Hell which he describes . . . at greater length and in cruder terms than Calvin in his *Institutes.* The Blessed will not, of course, rejoice in all these infernal torments *per se,* but incidentally, 'considering in them the order of God's justice, and their own liberation, whereat they will rejoice.' How can he thus decide, it may be asked, after he himself has pointed out that to rejoice in another's pains may be ordinarily classed as hatred, and that God does not delight in men's pains? These apparently invincible natural considerations are brushed aside by one plain Bible text [Psalms 58:11]: 'The just shall rejoice when he shall see the revenge.' That vindictive verse of a Hebrew poet, to St. Thomas, outweighs everything else."

For Coulton it was all the vindictive Hebrew poet's fault. This follows from the postulate that the God of the Jews is a God of wrath and the God of the Christians a God of love. It also follows from this principle that Aquinas, like Calvin, was an imperfect Christian—i.e. insufficiently merciful—because he had allowed himself to be too much influenced by the Old Testament spirit.

I am not sure why I so resented this passage. It was not the first or perhaps even the hundredth time I had met a reference to the universal acceptance and unquestionable truth of the contrast between Christian love and Jewish wrath. Few doctrines can lay equal claim to Christian antiquity, as we can see when we view it in its most extreme form, the Gnostic identification of Jehovah with Satan.

I suppose the cause of my resentment is to be found precisely in the fact that Coulton

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did not have any deep-seated bias against Jews or Judaism. His two great passions were opposition to pacifism and opposition to the Catholic Church, especially the latter; he saw himself as a kind of latter-day Lorenzo Valla, whose mission it was to expose the fraudulent Donations of Constantine of his own time. So far was Coulton from being an anti-Semite that he says many generous and handsome things about medieval Jewry in his book: the treatment of women, for instance, and the almost universal literacy. (Respecting literacy and education, he insists that it would be misleading to compare the average medieval Jew with his Christian contemporary; the only reasonable comparison would be with the Christian priest, and at that Coulton is convinced that the Jew would carry off the laurels. We read in Exodus [19:6]: "And ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation." There has been some groping for an understanding of Judaism as the religion of a priesthood without a laity; Coulton's assertion, in an entirely different context, that medieval Jewry as a whole was in a very significant respect to be considered in the same category with the Christian clergy is highly suggestive. But all this leads far afield; let us come back to our muttons.)

CLEARLY Coulton was not the kind of scholar who unthinkingly accepts any religious prejudice, however hallowed by time. The theme of vindictive Judaism and merciful Christianity must have run very deep indeed in his culture for him not to question it. Yet Elimelech of Lisinsk knew the Psalms better than Aquinas or Calvin; and though he had read and pondered the same verse by the same vindictive poet, his God and the God of his tailor does not seem very harsh or unforgiving at all. And since we are on the subject of forgiveness and Yom Kippur, neither does the God of the great Levi Yitzhak of Berditchev, in Buber's account: "He used to say: 'Like a woman who suffers overwhelming pain in childbirth, and swears she will never lie with her husband again, and yet forgets her oath, so on every Day of Atonement we confess our faults and promise to turn, and yet we go on sinning, and You go on forgiving us.'"

I return to Aquinas and Calvin. A few pages after Coulton has told us that if they are cruel it is chiefly because an ancient Hebrew poet was vindictive, we come to a passage about the elect and the damned: "A minority of human beings were 'elect': the majority were not indeed 'predestined' to hell, but their damnation was 'foreknown': God knew that this was their final destination. The difference here between St. Thomas Aquinas and Calvin is far smaller than men commonly imagine. . . . At least as far down as St. Alfonso Liguori (1750 [not many years earlier than Elimelech of Lisinsk and Levi Yitzhak of Berditchev]) it had been almost universally taught by writers in the Roman Church that the greater part of mankind would miss salvation. Some even foretold hell for an overwhelming majority; and others, like St. Alfonso, held that 'the more general opinion is that the greater part even of the Faithful are damned.' . . . Medieval preachers sometimes estimated the disproportion as one in a thousand, or ten thousand, or even more. . . . *Paucitas salvandorum* [the fewness of those to be saved] . . . comes very near to a *de fide* doctrine, in virtue of this universal patristic consent until recent times."

If the faithful have little chance of future bliss, infidels have none: "Tertullian painted the future vengeance of God upon pagan persecutors in language which still enjoys, after all these centuries, a melancholy notoriety. . . . St. Augustine even taught that unbaptized infants suffered in hell not only the penalty of losing the Beatific Vision but bodily torture also. . . . The only Ecumenical Council of the West which dealt with this question was that of Florence, which decreed: 'The Holy Roman Church professes and preaches that none who is not within the Catholic Church (not only pagans, but neither Jews nor heretics nor schismatics) can partake of eternal life, but shall go into everlasting fire . . . unless they have joined her before death.'" (The dogma here

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goes back to St. Cyprian, in the 3rd century: *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*—outside the Church, no salvation. Coulton shows that it was not until Cardinal de Lugo, in the middle of the 17th century, when the Church felt that a policy of suppleness was required in the face of a vigorous Protestantism and a nascent freethought, that the plain meaning of the Latin words began to be interpreted more liberally.)

The religion of the cruel and vindictive Jews knows nothing about the doom of the majority of the faithful to eternal torment. As for those who are not Jews, the standard doctrine is the Talmudic dictum: "The righteous of the nations of the world have a share in the world to come."

It has occurred to me that all this may be only *Dogmengeschichte,* intellectual history with an appeal primarily to theologians and amateurs of theological scholarship. Between the eloquence or silence of learned texts on the subject of damnation or salvation and the actual conduct and emotions of ordinary people there need not exist any direct relation at all. But that relation does exist, or at least it did. Think of the magnificent third chapter of James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man,* in which Stephen makes a retreat with the Jesuits and hears a number of sermons, in particular a sermon on hell. I have read that sermon again, and its sadism disturbs me as deeply as it did the first time I read it.

The entire passage is too long to quote, and excerpts would give only an attenuated impression of its total horror. It includes such elements as these: St. Anselm's vision of the damned so closely packed that they are unable to remove gnawing worms from their eyes; a pestilential stench sufficient, in St. Bonaventure's words, to infect the whole world; corpses putrefying into a jellylike mass of liquid corruption and giving off dense choking fumes of nauseous loathsome decomposition; brains boiling in the skull, bowels a redhot mass of burning pulp, and eyes flaming like molten balls; nameless suffocating filth; fire kindled in the abyss by the offended majesty of the Omnipotent God and fanned into everlasting and ever increasing fury by the breath of the anger of the Godhead; the damned turning on one another, blaspheming God (!) and execrating and howling at each other, helpless and hopeless; and the devils, who once were beautiful angels and now are as ugly as once they were beautiful (so ugly that after seeing one, St. Catherine said she would choose to walk on live coals for the rest of her life rather than see him again for an instant), mocking and deriding the souls they have seduced. "Now the time for repentance has gone by. Time is, time was, but time shall be no more!"

The words are Joyce's, but the contents are precise doctrine, and the *Catholic Encyclopedia* differs only verbally from the apostate artist. This is the hell to which Christian theology, Catholic and Protestant, assigned the large majority of the faithful, let alone the heretics, infidels, and pagans. Knowledge of this hell was not the esoteric possession of the learned but was insistently preached to all Christians, and was common to all Christians' vision of the life to come. In Joyce the memory of the terror inspired by this vision is reproduced as art. Traces of the same memory are found in folk humor: there is, for example, the story of the Scottish Calvinist divine who preached on the wailing and gnashing of teeth at the Last Judgment; when asked about those who had died without teeth, he answered: "Teeth will be provided."

What centuries of inventive ingenuity must have gone into the perfection of such a vision of hell; what fertile imagination and depraved inspiration! And all is attributed to a merciful God. (During the Lenten season of 1949 Pope Pius called for greater homiletic emphasis on hell. "Desire for heaven," he said, "is a more perfect motive than fear of eternal punishment, but from this it does not follow that it is the most effective motive to hold them [the people] far from sin and to convert them to God.")

Rabbinic literature knows of hell too, but it is a very rudimentary kind of hell as compared with the Christian one. And the folk

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was not ridden by the fear of hell. When I was a boy my pious and learned grandfather, *alav hashalom,* used to speak to me often about righteousness and sin, reward and punishment; but I remember his telling me in detail about hell only once, and then it was incidental to a proof of the blessedness of the Sabbath. On the Sabbath the damned have respite from their suffering and even the River Sambatyon, which twists around the precincts of hell, ceases to roar and to hurl up its rocks, as it does on the profane days of the week.

There is an extensive literature, mostly in Yiddish and Hebrew, that began more than a hundred and fifty years ago and consists in an unrelenting attack on the degenerate life and thought of the ghetto. This literature is essentially autobiographical. The writers recall with bitterness the wretched squalor of the *cheder* school, the obscurantism of the religion taught and practiced, the mean behavior that was considered the norm of right living. Nearly every one of them says in so many words that he cannot forgive the ghetto and Orthodoxy—which in their emotions go hand in hand—for a childhood poisoned by many things, and each draws up a detailed bill of particulars. Yet I cannot think of one who speaks of a childhood made unhappy by the fear of hell.

When the Jew thought of the world to come, he thought of Paradise. The learned and those with a taste for learning hoped, with a fair degree of confidence, for the enjoyment of the splendor of the Divine Presence and the study of Torah in the circle of Abraham and Moses. The simple anticipated the simpler joys: sitting on a golden throne, eating the flesh of Leviathan and the Ox of the Pit, drinking of the Preserved Wine. It did not cross their minds that a merciful God could send the majority of them to hell.

I HAVE no quarrel with the contemporary preference for difficult religion over the soft liberal religion that prevailed a generation and two generations ago. We have seen so much human evil in our day that even if we cannot quite accept orthodox theology's God, we can accept its man. Man no longer seems the naturally good and indefinitely perfectible being of the *philosophes* and of liberal religion; he more closely resembles the finished portrait drawn of him by classical theology with the indications provided in the Bible—indications like these: "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth" (Genesis 8:24); "The heart is deceitful above all things, /And it is exceeding weak [or 'desperately wicked']—who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9). What lends additional prestige to this theological portrait is that it is complex. Hobbes could speak in his *Leviathan* of "the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short"; but the Bible knows that not even man's fate is so simple: "What is man, that Thou art mindful of him?/And the son of man, that Thou thinkest of him?/Yet Thou hast made him but little lower than the angels, /And hast crowned him with glory and honour" (Psalms 8:5,6).

Consider the new respect for Puritanism as an intellectual and moral system. A generation ago the teachings of Freud and Tawney, vulgarized *à la portée de tout le monde,* had made everybody understand that Puritanism meant sexual inhibition and economic exploitation. G. K. Chesterton was thought to be only up to his usual tricks when he said, in his *Heretics*: "Many modern Englishmen talk of themselves as the sturdy descendants of their sturdy Puritan fathers. As a fact, they would run away from a cow. If you had asked one of their Puritan fathers, if you had asked Bunyan, for instance, whether he was sturdy, he would have answered, with tears, that he was as weak as water. And because of this he would have borne tortures." In our days Professor Perry Miller, neither a Puritan himself nor a fantast like Chesterton, takes Puritanism very seriously indeed in *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century.* Correspondingly, with all respect for the memory of the late Dr. Liebman, it is hard to take his *Peace of Mind* seriously; easy and consoling answers are no longer to our taste.

Nor is Puritanism foreign to the Jewish

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tradition. Hasidism, which dared to suggest a kind of camaraderie with God on Yom Kippur, is also responsible for the *T'filah zakkah* (prayer for purity), a silent meditation to be read before the communal Yom Kippur devotions. The *T'filah zakkah* is a passionate declaration of unworthiness and dependence on God's grace—a typical Puritan document.

All this having been said, I persist in thinking that the Jewish backwardness in the matter of hell is better than the Christian accomplishment. On the evidence of hell, the ancient Christian formula of a merciful Christianity confronting a vindictive Judaism is wrong.

A final quotation is in order. It is from an article entitled "On Transgressions and Their Punishment," by Professor Saul Lieberman of the Jewish Theological Seminary, published in the Hebrew part of the two-volume *Festschrift* presented to Professor Louis Ginzberg on his seventieth birthday: "Research into visions of hell is not merely a matter for amateurs of mysteries and folklore alone; it has a much wider import. In these visions we sometimes detect men's ideas on justice and on transgression and its punishment. What is more, many of the cruel tortures of the Roman rule were incorporated into the idea of hell from actual practice, and the authors of these visions were really talking about contemporary phenomena.

"We can recognize the influence of the hell in this life on the hell in the life to come. Crushing the limbs, cutting out the tongue, burning out the eyes, chopping off hands and feet—all of which are mentioned in the lives of the saints, in the works of the Greek and Roman writers and in the Talmudic literature—were carried out in practice by the executioners. Rabbinic literature is accustomed to showing the similarities and differences between the kingdom of earth and the kingdom of heaven. It is right that evildoers who offended the honor of heaven should be punished with no less severity than those who offended the honor of the king of flesh and blood. One is forced to the conclusion that our sages, of pious memory, did not refrain from applying the laws of this world to the other world. . . .

"We conclude that the hell of this world certainly influenced the hell of the next world; we must now inquire whether there was not a reciprocal influence, of the next world on this. The Christian rulers were very well acquainted with the visions of hell, either from books or from the sermons of priests. Is there any wonder that these visions made an impression on them? Did not the Spanish Inquisition find a finished and detailed program of cruel tortures ready at hand in their literature of visions of hell? We should not be astonished by the customary medieval punishment of hanging offenders by their feet, with their heads dangling, since this punishment is mentioned in almost every Christian work on hell. What is more, even the punishment of hanging by the feet over a bonfire . . . was carried out in medieval practice. Similarly, hanging amidst dogs biting the hanging man is not alien to the Christian visions. Likewise, the authorities did not disdain the obscene torture [of hanging by the virile member] mentioned earlier.

"In sum, a large number of the cruel tortures practiced by the wicked authorities passed to the hell of the other world, were refined and perfected there, and returned to this world of falsehood; and they still prevail in this world."

It is not the Psalmist that we should blame for the hells of St. Thomas and Calvin.

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THE IRREPRESSIBLE HERR SCHACHT

Hitler's Adviser Stages a Comeback

ALFRED WERNER

WHEN Wilhelm Schacht, German newspaperman, gave his newly born son Hjalmar the middle names "Horace Greeley," it is possible that he was aware of the noble statement once made by the founder of the New York *Tribune*: "If, on a full and final review, my life and practice shall be found unworthy of my principles, let due infamy be heaped on my memory."

Dr. Hjalmar Horace Greeley Schacht was in his late sixties when, charged with being a major war criminal, he faced the judges of the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg. He had served Hitler as a member of the Reichstag, Reichsminister of Economics, Plenipotentiary for War Economy, President of the Reichsbank, and Reichsminister without Portfolio; yet he had been perspicacious enough to prefabricate an alibi by dabbling with anti-Nazi tendencies. And when the judges at Nuremberg reluctantly acquitted him, they fulfilled a prediction that had been made in verses published in the satirical magazine *Simplizissimus* as early as 1931:

And when we go to war at last,
Just fight and die—you duffer!
For win or lose, the war once past,
Be sure Herr Schacht won't suffer! . . .

When beaten, sore, with crumbling walls,
The wretched Germans flee,
Behind it all, behind it all
*Herr Schacht will hide—you'll see!**

Most of the Nazi bigwigs who shared the dock with Schacht in Nuremberg are now either dead or in jail, but the man who liked to refer to himself as the "Economic Napoleon of the 20th Century" now lives undisturbed with his second wife near Hamburg in the British zone, unrepentant, self-assured, and righteously indignant as ever. He seems not in the least afraid of the Goddess of Justice! When in 1947, after his Nuremberg acquittal, a German de-Nazification court sentenced Schacht to eight years of forced labor, the decision was quashed by the Court of Appeals at Ludwigsburg, Wuerttemberg, in the American zone. However, the Minister of de-Nazification of Wuerttemberg-Baden overruled the appeals court and ordered a new trial for January 31, 1949. The scene was ready for the trial, but the defendant was absent. A new date was set and the President-Justice warned Schacht that he would be tried *in absentia* should he fail to appear. On the appointed day, Schacht did not appear and instead sent a letter claiming that the entire trial was illegal. Thereupon the court rejected the appeal it had previously granted Schacht.

The "Economic Wizard" should be in jail again by now, but it is questionable whether the Hamburg authorities, who twice failed

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ONLY the other day a high official of the American Military Government in Germany announced that there no longer exists any reason why Hjalmar Schacht, Hitler's minister of finance, should not be appointed an official of the West German government. Freed of all taint, Schacht is now actively engaged in a campaign to reestablish himself in German politics; his recently published autobiography "explaining" his political twists and turns is a best-seller in Germany and may soon be published here. ALFRED WERNER examines this autobiography for what it reveals of Schacht's character and of the tendencies of German politics in general. Mr. Werner, who has been a frequent contributor to COMMENTARY, was born in Vienna in 1911 and holds a doctorate from the University of Vienna.

* Translation quoted from *Final Judgment*, by Victor H. Bernstein, 1947.

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to force him to go to Ludwigsburg, will ever deliver him to his jailers.

Recently Dr. Schacht had to cancel a lecture, to be held before the members of the Rhein-Ruhr Club—an organization of industrialists—in a town in Westphalia, because the Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund (German Labor Unions) threatened that, if Schacht spoke, ten thousand workers would strike in the Ruhr area.

The textiles firm, Yarur, in Chile, has asked Schacht to become its financial and commercial adviser. The Yarurs are Christian Arabs who belong to the wealthiest and most influential families in Chile. It remains to be seen whether the Allies will permit Schacht to emigrate to Chile. If he should go to Chile, he could be of enormous aid to the large German minority which is pro-Nazi.

As early as the summer of 1945, when he still was a Nuremberg defendant, Schacht had, at the request of American Major C. J. Hynning, worked out several reports giving his "expert's opinion" on the economic future of Germany. About two years later, as a free man, he started writing articles for the *Weltwoche,* a widely known Zurich weekly that once flirted with Nazism, advising the Western world on how to manage its destiny. At present the indefatigable old man is on the editorial staff of the *Welt,* a leading newspaper in the British zone, making thinly concealed demands for colonies for Germany. He does not mind giving interviews, and to a correspondent of *Newsweek,* who found him as confident and healthy as ever, he confided his wish to lecture in the United States again as he did in 1930 when he pleaded that Germany could not pay its First World War debts. Above all, he has restored his financial position by becoming the author of a best-seller, *Abrechnung mit Hitler* (Rowohlt), which is freely circulated all over Trizonia.

"RUTHLESS attack is evidence of right!" the late Hitler once proclaimed, and anyone who expects Schacht's *Abrechnung* to be a meek "Apologia Pro Vita Sua" will be deeply disappointed. Throughout his eighty-five-thousand-word opus the author poses as a "non-political" expert concerned with the welfare, not of any single party, but of the German fatherland. He is rather strangely silent about the fact that, together with Walther Rathenau, he, the "non-political," was a founding member of the German Democratic party and that for years he, the "Aryan liberal," was the darling and hope of the pro-republican forces who got him the position of Reichsbank president. He brazenly declares, on the other hand, that he was never a member of the Nazi party. Actually he was an *Ehrenmitglied,* or honorary member, paying dues amounting to one thousand Reichsmark per month. Not a single word about his quarrels with the Nazis in the mid-20's when they "accused" him of being a Budapest Jew by the name of Hajum Schachtl! And to find out about some of the dirty financial deals in which he was involved as a banker one has, of course, to consult other sources. . . .*

Schacht's opus appeared as one in a series of novels (!) that includes fiction by Joseph Conrad, Ernest Hemingway, André Gide, and Ignazio Silone, as well as such German anti-fascists as Erich Kaestner, Theodor Plivier, and Kurt Tucholsky. Ironically, the title of Schacht's book, *Settling Accounts with Hitler,* is reminiscent of the one the Fuehrer first gave to his autobiography: he called it *Eine Abrechnung,* and this eventually became the subtitle of *Mein Kampf,* volume one.

Anti-fascist Germans rebuked the publisher, Ernst Rowohlt, for permitting Schacht to publish his concoction and receive a fat check for it, while the career of minor Nazi scribblers has been stopped by *Druckverbot.* (The first three hundred thousand copies of *Abrechnung* sold out in a few weeks.) Rowohlt, who has moved his headquarters from Berlin to Stuttgart, quickly dissociated himself and his firm from Schacht's ideology, but older Germans remember that during the Weimar Republic he had, rather nonchalantly, published both leftist and Nazi writers. . . .

* See, in particular, *Schacht: Hitler's Magician,* by Norbert Muhlen (1939).

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Together with the industrialist Fritz Thyssen, Schacht met Hitler and Goering for the first time in December 1930; he tells how he found them intelligent and modest, and saw nothing in Hitler's statements *"was uns irgendwie haette befremden koennen"* ("which might in any way have shocked us"). Hitler's program, he asserts, was *"das Festhalten an Religion, Eigentum, Privatinitiative und die Betonung des Persoenlichkeitswertes"* ("adherence to religion, private property, private enterprise, and emphasis on the value of personality").

Schacht still finds no stronger words with which to castigate the Nazi party's program than to say that it was a little *"ueberspitzt"* ("overdone") as far as its anti-Semitism was concerned. He claims to have been relieved upon learning that German Jews were to be given "the same legal status as foreigners," and was displeased to find out, later on, that, unlike other "foreigners" (for instance, Italian and Japanese businessmen in Berlin), they were deported to Auschwitz. And he insists that the exterminations "followed neither from the party program nor from other [Nazi] manifestations," and that, in fact, "such contempt of the law was directly at issue with the party program."

But even today this opportunist favors a sort of "moderate" anti-Semitism. Posing as a sincere friend to the Jews, he holds that in a "Christian state" it is "a mistake for Jews to be so keen in hankering after key cultural positions." (His frequent references to Christianity seem to be a bow to the leading German conservative party of today, the Christian Democrats.) To show that even Jews were, at first, in favor of Hitlerism, Schacht quotes from a statement issued in 1934 by the Verband Nationaldeutscher Juden, which, after Hindenburg's death, endorsed Hitler's "election" to the office of Reichspraesident—as though this tiny group of misguided fanatics, burdened with Jewish self-hatred, was representative of German Jewry. To shine as a genuine humanist, a lover of mankind, Schacht even counterattacks by assailing the Jews' "racialism," as it manifested itself in the idea of the "Chosen People," and in Ezra's prohibition of mixed marriages, but this humanism of his did not move him to any protest against the pogroms of November 1938.

Undoubtedly, Schacht looked down on Hitler and the uncouth self-made men around him. But though he was disgusted with the *"Byzantinismus"* (the servility) of Hitler's guests, and the "off-color stories and bacchanalia" typical of the Nazis' social gatherings, he attended them nevertheless. He may have favored the assassination of the Fuehrer (provided he had nothing to do with it), but unlike Otto Strasser, Roehm, Stennes, and other dissidents, he never risked an open break. When, in the summer of 1940, Hitler returned to Berlin after signing the Compiègne Armistice, Schacht was the first to congratulate him on his victory.

"His [Schacht's] judgment is always affected by his boundless personal ambition and his unreliable character. I believe if Hitler knew how to handle him properly Schacht would even now put himself at his disposal, unless he has given up the ship for lost." Thus wrote, as late as September 1941, Ulrich von Hassell, the elderly diplomat who was to pay with his life for his participation in the abortive July 1944 plot against Hitler (*The Von Hassell Diaries,* 1947).

Virtually all surviving anti-Nazi plotters deny Schacht's claim to have been prominent in the attempt to remove the Fuehrer; the sole exception is Hans Bernd Gisevius, who worked simultaneously for the Gestapo and the American OSS (*To the Bitter End,* 1947). Rudolf Pechel, an anti-Nazi editor who was arrested by the Gestapo, says that Schacht cautiously limited himself to occasional cynical jokes about Hitlerism and a few conversations with underground leaders (*Deutscher Widerstand,* 1947). Hans Rothfels, a former professor at Koenigsberg, asserts that the anti-Nazis did not trust Schacht: "A marked record of ambition, vanity, and opportunism prevented his being admitted to full partnership. Like Gisevius, who seems to have been the one nearest to Schacht, he was kept at arm's length by the leaders of the conspiracy." (*The German Opposition to Hitler,* 1948.)

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True, Schacht would have loved to take the place of Hitler. Von Hassell wrote in May 1944 that Schacht thought of himself as "the man of the hour." Yet he did not wish to commit himself one way or another. Astonishingly, he now devotes a long section of the book to his anti-Nazi activities. According to Schacht, the *coup* he planned (or claims to have planned) with General von Witzleben in September 1938 was the only competently organized attempt of its kind. If it failed, the responsibility must be shared by Chamberlain and Daladier, the Wehrmacht, the German churches, the liberal bourgeoisie, and the workers alike. As for the conspiracy of July 1944,* Schacht has no use for it at all.

After Colonel Stauffenberg had smuggled into Hitler's headquarters the bomb which almost killed him, the Gestapo in a panic arrested everyone who might have had the remotest connections with the conspirators. Schacht was arrested, too, on July 23, 1944, and spent eight months in a Gestapo prison and was kept thereafter in the Ravensbrück, Flossenbürg, and Dachau concentration camps. For the first time the old man experienced on his own body what the victims of Nazism were made to suffer; yet even in the concentration camps he received special treatment, and at Dachau he was able to visit the Schuschniggs and listen to their radio. Eventually he was liberated in Southern Tyrol, together with other prominent prisoners, by American troops; but he was shocked when, instead of releasing him at once, the Americans kept him imprisoned and finally sent him to Nuremberg. He thus analyzes this enormous error:

"From the fall of 1939 onward I had constantly risked my life fighting Hitler. I, who had all the time fought against the war with all means, was now termed a war criminal. Gradually I realized what enormous intellectual and moral confusion the Hitler system and the war, precipitated by Hitler, had wrought in the minds of all mankind. Anyone who had worked under Hitler was persecuted, even if he had fought Hitler from within, like myself."

As for developments since V-E Day, Schacht sees the "guilty men" as those British and American theorists who failed to appreciate that monarchist traditionalism is "innate" to the German people (this is the founder of the erstwhile anti-monarchist German Democratic party talking). Instead, they uttered a lot of nonsense about democracy to people who were hungry, cold, and without houses because the Allies would not realize that Germany must be given a chance to live: "We shall never allow the Allies to rob us of our conviction that our sacrifices had a meaning and a significance." But "us" and "our" apparently does not refer to all postwar Germans; Schacht seems to loathe, for instance, "the old labor leaders who, under the protection of the occupying powers, try to recapture their former positions." At the same time, in 1948, he still finds praise for the "enthusiastic, buoyant, and responsible elements who endeavored to steer the National Socialist *Tatwelle* [literally: wave of action] towards the fine sincere goal of social justice."

A man of many talents, Schacht has recently disclosed that at Nuremberg he wrote an operetta about the love of an American soldier for a *Fräulein*. Should he fail in his bid for German leadership, he may still make headlines as a producer of romantic idylls for the German stage. In the meantime, he is getting royalties from his autobiography, which at this moment is also making the rounds of American publishers' offices.

* See "The Junker Plot to Kill Hitler," by Alfred Werner, COMMENTARY, July 1947.

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FROM THE AMERICAN SCENE

REVOLT OF THE REEFER-MAKERS

Memories of a Capitalist

S. L. BLUMENSON

ONE sunny spring day in the year 1905, a cloak operator named Friedland (prophetically nicknamed "Columbus" by his fellow workers) pulled a switch that set in motion a train of events which was to wipe out the sweat shop and begin a new era in the garment industry. Though I was only a youngster just out of my teens (and a hireling of the "bosses" to boot), I can claim a part in that day's eventful doings.

Friedland worked in a large sweat shop on Walker Street (near Broadway) in New York City which manufactured those children's coats called "reefers." Suddenly he stood up from his work, strolled over to the switch handle which controlled the electric motors driving the fifty sewing machines, and jerked it down. As soon as the sewing machines purred to a standstill, the hundred-odd workers—men, women, and some children—held a shop meeting under Friedland's direction, and voted unanimously to strike. Following this, they all trooped down to Adelson's Saloon and Meeting Hall on Monroe Street near Pike Street, on the lower East Side, appointed a strike committee, selected pickets, and by the following morning the strike was in full swing.

IN THOSE days, there were about twenty-five shops clustered around Walker, Lispenard, Church, and Canal Streets, between Broadway and West Broadway. In addition, there were a number on Greene and Wooster Streets, and two on Spring Street, all west of Broadway.

As it happened, about eighty per cent of the bosses and workers in this section of the industry were *landsleit* and relatives. They all came from a small district in Lithuania, the *uyezd* or county of Hooman, in the province of Minsk—from such villages as Schmilovits, Dukor, Puchovitch, Hooman, Bobroisk, Berezin, and Minsk.

Most of the manufacturers were graduates of a pioneer shop established in a loft on alley-like Pelham Street, which is one block long and runs between Monroe and Cherry Streets, near Pike, right around the corner from Adelson's Saloon and Meeting Hall. This shop was opened in the year 1889 by an immigrant from Dukor, his two sons, and his son-in-law. The father was a tailor by trade, as was the son-in-law. The two sons, however, were ex-yeshiva *bochurim*, and excellent Hebrew scholars. When they opened their own shop, after working in various sweatshops, the father did the cutting and finishing and pressing, and the other three operated the sewing machines. The business grew and prospered, and it soon became a beehive of new immigrants from the county of Hooman. Older men, small town *baal-*

S. L. BLUMENSON here tells from personal memory the story of a strike that played an important part in the revolt against the sweatshop and brought trade unionism for the first time to the American garment industry. Mr. Blumenson was born in Minsk, Russia, and came to this country as a child, fifty-five years ago. He grew up on New York's lower East Side and moved to California in 1935. Mr. Blumenson wrote the article "Utopia on Columbia Street," published in this department in October 1948.

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habaatim (householders), became pressers; younger men became *araushelfers*, helpers to operators; and the young women, mostly teenage, became finishers. (The "reefer" industry was then one hundred per cent Jewish. Italian workers had not as yet infiltrated. Some "finishing" homework was taken by a few Italian women, who carried big bundles of cloth on their heads, well balanced and erect, with the grace of field workers carrying sheaves of grain.)

In time, some of the graduates of this shop opened places of their own, two or three pooling their skills and their few dollars. It did not require much capital to start a small factory. A dark hole of a loft, more often than not over a smelly stable, at a monthly rental of ten or twelve dollars, a few wooden horses and boards for a cutting table, a few chairs, a long cutting knife, and a gas or wood stove for the solid press irons—these made up a shop. Every operator had to supply his own sewing machine.

The "capitalists" bought a few bolts of very cheap cloth, cheap even for those days, and manufactured children's wearing apparel ranging in price from ninety cents to two dollars apiece wholesale, and women's and misses' finery from a dollar and a half to three seventy-five. Despite these low prices, and to compensate for the cheapness of the cloth, these garments had to have "style." Yards and yards of soutache, braid, and gimp were sewed onto them in all manner of geometric design, and some were trimmed with innumerable ornamental buttons. It does not require a cost accountant to determine that little was left over for the payroll.

Most of these shops had originally clustered around their "alma mater" on Pelham, Monroe, Cherry, and Pike Streets, but circumstances compelled them to move elsewhere. The "circumstances" were a gang of fire-bugs operating on the East Side, who set fire to whole blocks of loft buildings which burned to the ground with great loss of life. (The gang was finally caught, and the members, one a woman, received sentences of thirty-five to forty-five years in Sing Sing.) In their new quarters, the more progressive factories prospered, changing to power machines, and charging the workers fifty cents a week for the use of them. Some even installed gas irons. The operators of these shops were not contractors, but small manufacturers. They made the cheapest sort of women's, misses', and children's capes (worn extensively in those days), coats in all sizes, and "reefers."

For the most part these garments were unlined or half-lined, because the cost of felling in linings by hand was more than the traffic could bear. Just about this time, however, a way was found to sew linings by machine, and these downtown shops began to make all-lined clothing, giving the "classier" uptown shops tough competition. Moreover, plush coats were beginning to displace cloth coats in the feminine scale of values, and downtown shops, having eliminated the expensive, skilled hand tailoring, began slowly to monopolize this highly profitable business.

Then came the ravages of the boll weevil and the consequent failure of the Southern cotton crop, which created a great demand for cheap clothes. The new mail-order houses in Chicago and New York grew by leaps and bounds, and the East Side makers of cheap clothes became their chief source of supply.

At the time, as I have said, I was just out of my teens. I had left a "career" in Wall Street, where I had been for many years employed as a "stock runner" for the old Consolidated Stock Exchange, on Broadway and Exchange Place, and for a number of large brokerage houses, for a job with the very cloak and suit and "reefer" house whose switch Friedland pulled.

My duties were many. I was salesman, bookkeeper, shipping clerk, piece goods buyer, and "labor relations" man. In my spare time I also swept out the shop. Having been also in charge of the payroll, I can testify that an operator working day and night, seven days a week, rarely earned more than twelve dollars, a finisher no more than nine, and a presser no more than ten. This was, of course, at the height of the fall season. From December to May, work was mainly part-time sample-making, and that was given only to those whom the foreman or the boss favored.

The picket line showed up early on the morning after the strike call. Since all the pickets were *landsleit* and relatives (two of the pickets were the bosses' own brothers), and as it happened to be a rainy morning, we

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invited them to do their picketing inside the shop. Meanwhile, I hurried down to Adelson's Saloon and Meeting Hall to talk things over with the strike committee.

Adelson's, despite the title "saloon," was a highly respectable place, where large schooners of beer were dispensed at a nickel a schooner. Mr. Adelson was an Orthodox Jew who served nothing but sliced herring and pumpernickel as free lunch. He did have a small cask of *schnaps*, but this was dispensed mainly for ritualistic purposes like *kiddush* and *havdullah*. The large hall in the rear of the saloon was rented out for Jewish and Irish (both green and orange) lodge meetings. The Irish saloon keepers, and there were many in the neighborhood, did not bother with such things as meetings. Adelson's was closed tight on Saturdays and Jewish holidays, when the hall was used by Congregation Chevra Anshei Rudgensk as a synagogue. On every second Tuesday the local chapter of the Ancient Order of Hibernians met at Adelson's, and on Thursdays a lodge of Ulstermen. They did their drinking, however, at Angus Cambell's on the corner. Cambell was a Scotsman and a neutral; furthermore, the members of both organizations had no great partiality to beer.

I found Friedland and the members of the strike committee awaiting us. After downing a couple of Mr. Adelson's deep and tall and foamy schooners, out of respect to Mr. Adelson who had donated the meeting hall gratis to the strikers, we got down to business.

The demands were two cents more per garment for the operators, a cent and a half for the finishers, and a penny for the pressers. The cutters, however, the aristocrats of the trade, demanded a fifty-four hour week, fifteen to eighteen dollars per week, and time and a half for overtime. (Cutting machines were not in use in the downtown shops, and cutting was done with a long knife resembling an executioner's sword, on five or six inch layers of cloth. It was somewhat like cutting sheet metal.)

I assured the committee that the "bosses" were ready to agree; but as our shop was the only one struck, higher prices would put us at a disadvantage against competition. And secondly, how could the "bosses" be certain that the same thing wouldn't happen again in a month or two? "The bosses," said I, "want to settle, but with a responsible union. But there is no responsible union. Not even a responsible local."

Friedland had a ready answer to this. "Let us go down and talk it over with Congressman Meyer London; he will tell us what to do."

Congressman Meyer London was a well-known labor attorney, who gave everyone legal and other advice, and often forgot to send a bill for his fee; he was the first and only congressman ever elected in New York State on the Socialist ticket. A placid, kindly, humorous man, even the strong Tammany leadership on the lower East Side made no strong efforts to defeat him, preferring him to someone from Charlie Adler's Republican Club. Re-elected a number of times, he was well thought of in Congress, and, indeed, his defeat in his last campaign was due not to his opponents, but to hoodlumism on the part of some of his adherents. (Vice-President Fairbanks, addressing a Republican rally in a hall on the corner of Grand and Orchard Streets, was heckled by some of the London rooters inside and outside the hall. Outraged at this insult to the Vice-President of the United States, the East Side citizens defeated the whole Socialist slate, and Meyer London with it.)

The next morning at his downtown Broadway office, I explained to London that we were strikers and bosses in search of a union.

In the last years of the 19th century Joseph Barondess had led an abortive strike against the large uptown manufacturers and their contractors, and had been jailed for his efforts. Since then there had been no active organized labor movement in the cloak industry in New York. There did exist a cutters local, but at the time not many Jews were cutters. The cutters kept aloof; many of them came to work wearing frock coats, high silk hats, and with walking sticks. London thought that a remnant of Barondess's defunct union might be hovering, ghost-like, somewhere on the East Side. He suggested that we contact the bartender at Wolf's Workingman's Friend Saloon and Meeting Hall on Forsyth Street, and inquire for Abe Rosenberg and a Mr. Grossman.

Wolf's Workingman's Friend Saloon and Meeting Hall was well known to everyone on the East Side. Over the door there hung a big sign with a three-foot picture of a

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schooner brimming with amber colored beer; a man was drowning in the schooner; and firemen were running up ladders to rescue him. On the side of the schooner was a big "Five Cents," and underneath, in large Hebrew script, was printed the words *Arbeiter Freint*. It became common usage on the East Side to call for an *arbeiter freint* when ordering a beer.

In the saloon part of the establishment was a long bar with the free lunch, rich with kosher tidbits. Wolf was a godsend to many a hungry immigrant, who for five cents worth of *arbeiter freint* could eat a full meal. He was a huge man, gentle as a child, and as everyone who knew him said, "with a heart of gold." He was a henchman of Big Tim Sullivan, the picturesque Tammany leader on the East Side, and his saloon was a gathering place for the many East Side pushcart peddlers, who always needed political favors and voted solid Tammany. Wolf also conducted a sort of general delivery branch of the post office. Many immigrants, with uncertain places of residence, received their mail from their families in the old country through Wolf.

The bartender at Wolf's, after a number of *arbeiter freint*, put us in touch with Mr. Rosenberg and Mr. Grossman. They were in a small room upstairs, playing pinochle with some cronies. They halted the game while we explained our mission. When we finished, they both threw in their cards and grabbed their hats, and all of us hurried down to Adelson's. Here were more than a hundred young and enthusiastic workers, waiting to be organized into a local. That same afternoon Friedland's little band became the Reefer Makers Union, Local 17.

THE following morning we all met in London's office. An agreement was drawn up and signed, with the understanding that the other "reefer" shops would be called out within two weeks.

The "victorious" strikers marched back in formation, from Monroe Street to Walker Street, by way of Canal and Church Streets, past the other shops in the district. At our shop, the "defeated" bosses ordered up two barrels of beer, a couple of dozen salt herring, pumpernickel, and pickles. To a select few, the shop foreman provided a *schnaps* and a portion of sponge cake at the bosses' expense.

The following Sunday all the other "reefer" shops in the district were called out; every shop but ours was shut down. This time the strike was organized by experts. Rosenberg and Grossman knew how such things worked. Adelson's was no longer large enough to house all the strikers; the overflow met at Wolf's. Before the week was out, the bosses capitulated, agreeing to all demands.

Once again London's office was busy drawing individual agreements; once again they were signed, sealed, and delivered. This time the victorious workers, about thirty-five hundred strong, paraded back to work with flags and banners flying, preceded by a union band blaring the "Marseillaise" and "Chossen-Kalla-Mazel-Tov." The parade circled and snaked through the narrow, cobblestoned streets of the "reefer" shop district, and finally ended up at the corner of Spring and Greene Streets. There victory tasted sweetest: Weinstein Brothers, the strongest and fastest growing of them all, had also capitulated. There Abe Rosenberg, the marshal of the parade, and Grossman, the vice-marshal, with wide red satiny sashes across their chests, addressed the victors, amidst a swirl of newspaper confetti, and cheers from the crowd.

But the hero of the day was the leader of the first revolt, "Columbus" Friedland. He had taken the day off from work and had been honored with an assignment as color bearer. He carried an improvised union banner, flanked on the left by a red flag, and on the right by a large red, white, and blue flag. A popular Yiddish song of that time, "Lebenzul-Columbus"—"Long Live Columbus"—was played by the band in his honor and all the assembled workers joined in with loud voice.

Then the workers dispersed to their respective shops, where barrels of beer, dozens of salt herrings, pickles, and pumpernickel awaited them. Once more the machines started their roar, the presses their sizzle and thumping, and the young women finishers sang the sad folk songs they had learned in the old country.

THERE followed three years of troubled peace. Petty grafters infiltrated into the union ranks and caused trouble. Chiselers among the employers caused more trouble. Wild-cat stoppages became a common occurrence. These years were profitable years for the manufacturers, and they began to feel

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their oats. They claimed that the union leadership alone was at fault, that they could not control the union members. They organized into a manufacturers association, and in the spring of 1907 declared a lock-out, refusing to renegotiate a contract with Local 17.

But they had reckoned without the new leadership of the union, and the new fighting spirit which hundreds of new members, mostly young newly arrived immigrants, had brought into the Local. Shortly after the first "revolt" in 1904, Benjamin Schlesinger, an astute and experienced labor organizer, had been called in to take over the leadership of Local 17 and to help organize the uptown shops.

He was one of the ablest, most honest, sincere, and intelligent of union leaders of his day. Confident of the future of the garment workers and of the industry as a whole, he hated the sweat shop with a fanatical hatred. He fought the grafters and troublemakers, and struggled to instill a sense of responsibility into the rank and file. But this last was no easy task.

Then there was a new factor. The failure of the Russian revolution of 1905, and the persecutions which followed, had brought thousands of fighting young men and women to this country. They flocked to the "reefer" shops, becoming members of Local 17. Once again, the young men became apprentices, *araushelfers,* to operators; the young women became finishers. Some of the more sturdy, usually the most illiterate, became *unterpressers,* apprentice pressers. A few of the more ambitious became assistant cutters. Most of these young new arrivals had been members of the first Jewish labor union in Russia, the Bund, which had been outlawed and forced underground. To these new arrivals, the lock-out and subsequent strike declaration resolved into a *klassenkampf,* a class struggle, a battle against the exploitation of the workers by the capitalist bosses (the first labor unions in Russia were all Marxist and political).

THE employers received an inkling of what was in store for them from a young *landsman,* a Puchovitcher, who had arrived in New York from Russia only seven weeks before the 1907 strike (or lock-out, as you please), and who had for six of these weeks been struggling, as Friedland's *araushelfer,* to master the art of threading a sewing machine and sewing a straight seam. This ex-Bundist and firebrand, this victim of six weeks of American capitalist exploitation, cried in classical Lithuanian Yiddish, when the committee of manufacturers came to our place to hang up the sign which declared the shop to be an open shop: "We will reckon with you, you bloodsuckers who live off the toil of the workers, you who live in luxury while we die of hunger and starvation! You may battle us, you may starve us, but we will never surrender! We will die on the barricades first!"

He then climbed up on one of the press tables, raised his right hand into a stiff hammer salute and cried: *"Arrunter mit die bosses; arrunter mit dem capitalistishen system; es lebe die oonia, es lebe Schlesinger, es lebe der Forwarts, svoboda oder tait!"* ("Down with the bosses, down with the capitalist system, long live the union, long live Schlesinger, long live the *Forward,* liberty or death!") Everyone in the place—the assembled workers, the bosses, visiting customers, and salesmen—all applauded enthusiastically. (A few years later, this ardent Marxist and devoted unionist opened a non-union contracting shop on Long Island, and fought the union to a standstill.)

Whoever was at fault in forcing this strike, the fact is that the strike had to take place. The working conditions, the long hours, the sub-standard wages, were slave standards in Schlesinger's eyes. He stood for a forty-four hour week, a living wage, and, above all, for sanitary and well-lighted shops. But he did not want the strike to happen when it did. The revitalized union was busily engaged in organizing the uptown shops, the "bears" as they were called. The large and financially strong uptown manufacturers were mainly German and Hungarian Jews, to whom the mere mention of union was heresy. Unionizing these shops required a strong organization and a full treasury. It also needed the good will of public opinion, for the English press would surely favor the employers, who numbered among them quite a few solid, public-spirited citizens, politically well connected. Schlesinger wanted to bide his time, but events forced his hand.

The struggle was mainly between *landsleit* and relatives, but it developed into a grudge fight, one of the nastiest labor struggles in

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the short history of the Jewish labor movement.

THIS "Reefer-Makers Strike," as the 1907 strike came to be known, followed the set pattern for all strikes in those days before conciliation and mediation. As first step, the employers sought to replace the striking employees with non-union workers. The union, on its side, countered by appointing pickets to keep the strike breakers from entering the shops. The next step was for the employers to hire a professional strong-arm organization, officially known as a "detective agency," which provided guards to keep pickets from molesting the non-union workers. The union in turn countered by selecting able-bodied members from its ranks to protect the pickets from the hired guards. (Sometimes the same outfit rented strong-arm men to the union and the employers.) There followed street battles between pickets and guards. At this point the police entered the picture.

Now, to the police of this district, strikes were something new. Their district had consisted mainly of textile distributing concerns and their warehouses, until the "reefer" shops invaded its outskirts, and with them their labor disturbances. The police considered the strikers foreign agitators, anarchists, socialists —in a word, trouble-makers bent on tearing down the established order, at least of the Leonard Street precinct. Maybe that stuff went on the East Side, maybe such subversive activities were all right for the Eldridge and Madison Street precincts. But not for Leonard Street, which was sworn to uphold the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. No such things in their district as picketing or mass meetings. And the managers of the large and impressive textile houses, who sold their goods to the struck employers, praised the police officials of the district for their patriotic and loyal attitude. In any case, the rights of strikers were rather nebulous and ill-defined in those days.

Fully appreciating the value of publicity and public good will, Schlesinger denounced the employers for arbitrarily locking out the workers, and for refusing to bargain collectively. The East Side press, even including the usually conservative and anti-union *Taggeblat,* and public opinion generally, came over to the side of the strikers.

The editor of the *Forward,* who from the start had fulminated against the "cockroach capitalists," as he termed the employers, now began to attack the police in his daily editorials, calling them gendarmes and Cossacks, ants doing the dirty work of cockroaches. If he had stuck to mere name-calling, it would have done no harm, for the police of the Leonard Street precinct were about ninety-nine per cent Irish and did not read the *Forward.* But Cahan went further. In an editorial, he advised the pickets of their legal rights and urged them to refuse to move when ordered. "Look the policeman in the eye and insist on your rights," he advised. The first result was that many of the pickets received bad beatings, the police began a series of mass arrests, and the resulting fines began to deplete the union's skimpy treasury.

As the strike progressed from weeks to months, it developed into a slugging match. Pickets were assaulted, strong-arm men battered. A number of the employers were waylaid and beaten, and in retaliation a number of the union officials received the same medicine. Not a day passed without its street fights.

All this time no effort had been made to negotiate a settlement. To the "pure and simple" American Federation of Labor, and to the Central Federated Unions of New York, this socialist-led union was outside the fold. When Herman Robinson, the AFL representative in New York, finally offered his good services, Schlesinger turned him down. He wanted no help from the "reactionary" AFL. Standing fast for unconditional surrender, he saw the strike enter its fifteenth week.

TWO sensational highlights of this strike were the headlined attempted assassination of Abe Rosenberg, who was in direct charge of the strike—and my own arrest and incarceration in the Tombs prison for illegally possessing and carrying firearms.

The report of the attempted assassination read like a cloak-and-dagger adventure, and indeed, as I can now report, it had no basis in fact. It was pure propaganda.

In ordinary and peaceful times, Abraham Rosenberg was a most reasonable man, and one of the "safest and sanest" of union leaders. In union matters he was non-political, leaning toward American "pure-and-simple" unionism, as enunciated by Samuel Gom-

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pers. But in troubled times he was a high-powered and calculating propagandist. While Schlesinger and Grossman and lesser lights went from hall to hall addressing the strikers and urging them to hold fast, Rosenberg was feeding the press.

His main outlet was the editorial page and the news columns of the *Forward*. In those days the *Forward* itself was a great expounder of the *klassenkampf*. Day by day, Rosenberg issued his tales of outrage, beatings, intimidations, arrests, and oppressions by the police at the instigation of the "cockroach capitalists." Some charges were true, but many were pure fabrications. The *Forward* itself fulminated against these "cockroach capitalists" until their own families began to disown them. The hardships of the strikers, as reported by Rosenberg, shocked the whole East Side community. As a master of pathos, Rosenberg had no equal—except, possibly, Jacob Gordon the dramatist.

And then came the climax, splashed in large-lettered headlines in all the East Side papers. Attempted Assassination of Abe Rosenberg, Beloved Leader of the Working Class. At midnight, on his way home, in a dark street, he had been set upon by a gang of hired hoodlums. Came the flash of a knife —and then, just as the assassin's knife was about to be plunged into his heart, eight strikers, who had followed their beloved leader unbeknownst to him, foreseeing just such a dastardly attack, rushed up and fell upon the cowardly assassins, who let the knife drop on the cobblestones and took to their heels.

The usual editorials followed, castigating the capitalists for allowing the strike to reach such murderous extremes. While not charging the employers directly with instigating the cowardly attempt, they asked the rhetorical question: "Who would be interested in the elimination of the beloved leader of the strike?" The readers of the *Forward* were well able to answer this for themselves. Popular opinion solidified behind the strikers. It was a master stroke by Rosenberg.

THE second headlined sensation was the arrest and incarceration of the secretary of the Manufacturers Association, in the person of this writer.

My lot in this strike had been a stormy one. I had the reputation of being liberal and progressive, and only the year before I had gathered together about one hundred young men and women, all newly arrived immigrants, and formed an Americanization club which met at the University Settlement. We held some very nice and informative meetings, and some very important men and women addressed the membership. And just as we were getting into full stride and gaining membership and fame, along came the strike and I was compelled to resign as leader. All the members, 106 young men and women, were members of Local 17, and all were out on strike.

Dr. Charles S. Bernheimer, assistant headworker of the University Settlement at the time, attempted to hold the club together, but to no avail, so shocked were they by the fact that the organizer and leader of the club was a reactionary and an enemy of the working class. In fact, some of the ex-Bundists, born conspirators, charged that I was a paid tool of the capitalists, a provocateur, who had been ordered to organize them into a group and lead them into the capitalist orbit. A relative of mine told my father that the union had documentary evidence to this effect.

The facts in my *cause célèbre*, which followed soon after, were simple. The building in which our shop was located had four lofts. The first three we occupied and the fourth was occupied by a skirt shop. The workers in this shop were naturally in sympathy with the strikers, and in the early morning joined the striking pickets in their efforts to keep the strikebreakers from entering the premises. This building had an old-fashioned iron door, with a heavy padlock, the key to which was ten inches long and weighed over a pound.

One Friday morning when I unlocked the door, the strikebreakers, the pickets, and their sympathizers all piled into the gloomy hallway and up the dark steep stairs. In the tussle that followed I received a couple of blows, and in defense I wielded the key. In the gloom of the stairway the flashing metal was mistaken for a gun, and the fighting crowd instantly dispersed.

That same afternoon I was told that a warrant had been sworn out against me for carrying and brandishing a gun. The union's strategy was that I was to be arrested late Friday afternoon so that I would have to stay in jail until Monday morning before

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I could be arraigned before a magistrate and have bail set. I knew I was in for trouble, for that same week two police officers had been shot to death by a gangster, and it went hard with any one charged with carrying a gun. So I went over to Newark for the week-end.

Early Monday morning I appeared at the Criminal Courts Building on Centre Street to surrender. Unhappily for me, the police wouldn't have me. There was some irregularity in the warrant. I tried to tell the officer in charge that the warrant was intended for me, and that I would waive the irregularity, but he laughed: "It's harder to get into jail than to get out. Until you get a valid warrant we can do nothing for you. In the meantime, please move over and make room for a steady customer."

However, being a New Yorker and an East Sider I had friends everywhere. A rescuer soon spotted me, a boyhood schoolmate who was now a plainclothesman attached to the Criminal Courts Building. When he heard of how I was being denied arrest by the police, he went to work at once. He advised me to go back to Walker Street and wait. In the meantime he would arrange for a legal warrant and would himself come over to take me into custody. "Don't worry, Sam," said he, "I have pull; they will greet you with open gates."

WHEN I got back to Walker Street, the street in front of our shop was jammed with strikers waiting to escort me to jail. I was greeted with catcalls, and cries of "murderer, gorilla, gangster."

About eleven A.M., my schoolmate came to take me into custody; escorted by the hooting crowd, we walked to Centre Street. I was immediately booked, and taken before a magistrate. The crowd also squeezed into the court room, hoping, no doubt, to see me immediately sentenced to the gallows.

The magistrate read the warrant and the accompanying short affidavit, looked me over severely, took my plea of not guilty, and held me in five thousand dollars bail.

Max Weinstein, president of the Manufacturers Association, and a lawyer named Red Jacobs who practiced in the downtown magistrates' courts, mainly in Essex Market court, were supposed to be waiting in court with bail, but Red Jacobs couldn't make it. He was tied up in another court. My schoolmate waited a while but routine compelled him to turn me over to an officer of the court who would escort me to the Tombs. He got a receipt for me and asked the court officer, as a matter of professional courtesy, not to apply handcuffs. My escort led me through a maze of corridors, stairways, and across the "Bridge of Sighs," down into a walled courtyard, through a stone tunnel, up two stairways, and finally to a big iron-barred gate, behind which ran a long line of double-decked cells. My escort got a receipt for me and left.

Two o'clock that afternoon, after I had feasted on the jail fare, black bread and tasty stew, a keeper came and notified me that I had been bailed. After signing a receipt for me, he led me back to the court room where Max Weinstein and Red Jacobs were waiting. I was free until the date set for the hearing, two weeks later.

MY LAWYER, Red Jacobs, was a well-known character of the time. He had a small office in a store right opposite the Essex Market court, next door to Silver Dollar Smith's Saloon. He came into the picture through Max Steuer, who was under retainer to the association. Mr. Steuer, of course, didn't practice in magistrates' courts, and Red Jacobs, who knew law but had tainted his career with the reputation of being a "fixer," handled the case instead. In the weeks before the hearing, I used to meet Jacobs in Silver Dollar Smith's Saloon nightly, and with one foot on Silver Dollar's highly polished brass rail, and the other on the silver-dollar-encrusted floor, we downed short beers, consumed his highly spiced free lunches, munched on pretzels, and planned the defense.

Then the case took a new turn: the complaining witness wasn't sure any more whether what he saw on the dark stairway was a key or a gun. Others who were also there swore it was a key. Some *kibbitzers* told him that I would be exonerated and he would be held for perjury.

So night after night his wife, who was my mother's *landsfrau*, brought her two children to my mother's house and begged my mother to prevail upon me to drop the case! I tried to explain to my mother that I was the defendant, and couldn't drop the case, that it

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was now in the hands of a magistrate and only he could decide. But my mother couldn't see that at all. Here was a Jewish husband, the father of two children, in danger of going to jail for perjury, and I refused to drop the case. Didn't I have a Jewish heart? Did I want to make orphans out of two Jewish children? It never dawned upon my mother that I, too, stood a fine chance of going to jail. From then on my own mother openly sympathized with the strikers against me.

In time, the case came up for a hearing. I brought Professor James H. Hamilton, headworker of the University Settlement, the late Dr. Henry Moskowitz, his brother Morris, my friend Judge Emil Fuchs, and a host of other prominent men to testify as to my good character. The complaining witness wasn't sure whether he saw a key or a gun, and the charges were dismissed.

By now the strike was in its fifteenth week. Most of the strikers were in bad straits, for the union had no money with which to pay strike benefits. The manufacturers also were in bad shape. None of them had financial means with which to risk the loss of the fall season which was by then almost in full swing. Both sides were ripe for a settlement, if only someone would lead the way. There now entered a mediator in the person of Herman Robinson. Despite the objections of Schlesinger, he brought Samuel Gompers to New York to intervene in the strike and to try to resolve it. Gompers, diplomatically but firmly, soon convinced the embittered opponents that a settlement was imperative for the good of all.

A meeting of representatives of both contending sides was arranged. They met at the old Union Square Hotel, at the southwest corner of Fifteenth Street and Union Square, which is now part of a ready-to-wear store.

The first two days were spent in recriminations, but both Gompers and Robinson were hopeful; they were used to such meetings. Finally, taking matters into their own hands, they advised both sides to make concessions, warning that if they hurried they might still save the fall season. Finally, on the seventh day of negotiations a settlement was reached. The union won major concessions, and the employers received a verbal promise that the AFL would see that the agreements would be kept. This last was a hard blow to Schlesinger's pride. To Schlesinger, Gompers and the whole of the AFL leadership were reactionary misleaders of the working class. But he had to swallow his pride and accept the decision.

To the relief of the community, the strikers, the employers, and the police, the strike was over. The workers returned quietly to work, without parades or other fanfare. The employers provided no beer or herring or pumpernickel or pickles. Like two pugilists who had fought a draw, they had new respect for each other, but the good fellowship—*landsmanshaft* and *gemütlichkeit*—which had prevailed before this disastrous conflict was gone forever.

Although the number of strikers involved was small as compared to the subsequent general strikes of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, the early strikes marked an epoch in the history of the garment industry. Local 17 served as the foundation upon which the strong ILGWU of today, with its high labor standards, was built. The Johnny-Come-Lately's (Brother David Dubinsky did not arrive in this country until 1911; Brother Israel Feinberg not until 1912) who took over and in after years absorbed Local 17 into the general body of the union, owe a great debt to these early and unsung fighters, who fought and won these first revolts against the sweatshops, and even to some of their "class enemies," of the employer group, who, on more than one occasion, seem to have played a "collaborationist" role with labor in the garment industry.

I have not referred to "Brother" David Dubinsky, or "Brother" Israel Feinberg in a derisive sense, as a "boss" to a "worker." It is my right and privilege to address them as "brother." For the last ten years I have been, and am, a member in good standing of Local 9, Shipfitters and Helpers Lodge, of the International Brotherhood of Boiler Makers, Iron Ship Builders and Helpers of America, affiliated with the American Federation of Labor.

As my grandmother used to say: a topsy-turvy world.

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CEDARS OF LEBANON

MEN AND WOMEN

Aggadic Sayings on the Relations of the Sexes

THE AGGADAH, which is made up stories, dialogues, homilies, sayings, proverbs, fables, and riddles scattered through the Mishna and the Jerusalem and Babylonian Talmuds (as well as the Masechtot, Mechilta, Sifra, Sifrei, Tosefta, Midrash Rabba, Midrash Tanchuma, Midrash Shmuel, Sefer Ha-Yetzira, Yalkut Shimon, etc.), was the principal form taken by the popular creativity of the Jewish people for several hundred years, flowering chiefly in the beginning of the Christian era. The first generations invested their liveliest powers in its creation and the later ones worked at perfecting and polishing its form. Its material contains many of the ideas and points of view of the Jewish people concerning its own history, past, present, and future. The national attitude, toward great men and their qualities, toward men and the world, toward specific beliefs and superstitions, are embodied in it.

The style of the Aggadah is generally simple and clear, with a certain well-paced graciousness. It combines the precision and incisiveness of a cultivated scholarly language with the colorful imagery of the spoken tongue. Some of the earlier sayings retain the fresh vigor of a language closely related to the usages of agricultural occupations. Much of this freshness and sly irony is, unfortunately, untranslatable.

The Bialik-Ravnitzky edition of the Aggadah, which appeared in six volumes from 1908 onwards and from which this translation was made, was the fruit of research into the numerous traditional collections of Aggadic sayings by the famous Hebrew poet and his scholarly patron. It was created with the needs of the modern Hebrew-reading and Hebrew-speaking generation in mind and intended as a popular, literary folk-collection rather than an archeological or scholarly monument. It has proved itself one of the most popular books in the Hebrew-reading world.—HILDA AUERBACH

Marriage

WE LEARNED that Rabbi Simeon said: Why did the Law say, "If any man take a wife" [Deut. 22:13] and not "if any woman take a man"? Because it is the way of a man to court a woman and not the way of a woman to court a man. This may be compared to a man who lost something—who looks for whom? He who has lost something looks for what he has lost.

A YOUTH of eighteen—to the bridal canopy.

RABBI ELAZAR said: No man without a wife can be called a man, for it is said: "Male and female created he them; . . . and called their name Adam." [Gen. 2:4]

IN THE past Adam was created out of the earth and Eve was created out of Adam, henceforth "In our image, after our likeness" [Gen. 1:26] there shall be no man without a woman and no woman without a man, nor both of them without the Divine Presence.

SAID Rabbi Tanchum, said Rabbi Hanilai: A man without a wife lives without joy, without any blessing, without any good. In the West [in Palestine] they said: Such a man lacks the Law and lacks a protecting wall. Rabbi bar Ula said: He also lacks peace.

THEY learned from Rabbi Ishmael: until man's twentieth year the Holy One, Blessed be He, sits and watches him to see when he will take a wife. When he reaches his twen-

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tieth year without marrying He says: May his bones be cursed!

Said Rav Chisda: In what way am I better than my fellows? Because I was married at sixteen, and if I had been married at fourteen I could have said to Satan: I can battle you any time!

Said Rav Huna: Whoever has reached twenty years and has not married a woman—passes all of his days in sin.

Said Rabbi Yochanan: a bachelor who resides in a large city and does not sin—the Holy One, Blessed be He, proclaims his virtue daily.

Rav Safra was a bachelor living in a large city. A Tanna [teacher in the Talmud] repeated this saying before Rabba and Rav Safra. Rav Safra's face grew troubled. Said Rabba to him: Not after your fashion, but after the fashion of Rav Hanina and Rav Oshaya, who were shoemakers in Palestine and used to sit in the whores' market-place making shoes for the whores and bringing shoes to them; the whores used to stare at them but they would not raise their eyes to look back at them. And the whores had an oath swearing: by the lives of the holy wise men in Palestine.

"The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever" [Psalms 19:9]. Said Rabbi Hanina: This is he who studies in cleanliness. What cleanliness? He takes a wife and afterwards he studies the Law.

Our teachers taught: To study the Law and to take a wife means: let him study the Law and take a wife afterwards. If he finds it impossible without a wife: let him take a wife and afterwards let him study the Law. Said Rav Judah, [said Samuel]: In practice—he takes a wife and afterwards he should study the Law. Rabbi Youchanan said: Millstones hang round his neck—can he occupy himself with the Law?

"Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; . . . but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." Said Rabbi Simeon ben Yochai: This is said of one who used to speak contemptuously of women and was himself sunk in debauchery, saying: Where is the woman whom I should court? When he grew old he sought to get himself a wife. They said to him: Miserable, unfortunate creature! What woman wants to be asked by you with your nostrils dribbling and your ears heavy and your eyes dim!

Rabbi Chiya bar Abba said: "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick," is said of him who becomes engaged to a woman and takes her after some time. "But when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life," is spoken of him who becomes engaged to a woman and takes her immediately as his wife.

A Roman lady asked Rabbi Yosi ben Halafta, said she to him: In how many days did the Holy One, Blessed be He, create the world? Said he to her: In six days. Said she: And from then on until now what has He been doing? Said he to her: The Holy One, Blessed be He, has been sitting and pairing off couples: so-and-so's daughter to so-and-so. Said she: Is this His occupation? I can do as much. I have a number of slaves and maidservants and I could pair them off in a single hour. Said he to her: Although it is easy for you, it is as difficult as the rending of the Red Sea for the Holy One, Blessed be He. Whereupon Rabbi Yosi ben Halafta left her and departed. What did she do? She took one thousand male slaves and one thousand female slaves and stood them in double rows, saying: Let him marry her and let her be married to him, and she paired them off in a single night. On the morrow they came before her—one with his head cut open, another with his eye dislocated, one with his arm in pieces, another with his leg broken. Said she to them: What is the matter with you? Said one: I don't want her. And the woman said: I don't want him. Thereupon she sent for Rabbi Yosi ben Halafta. Said she to him: Rabbi, your teaching is the truth, it is both proper and seemly, everything you said was well said!

Rabba listened to a man who was praying for a woman, saying: If only I could have her. Said he [Rabba] to him: You should not pray in this manner; if she is worthy of you, she will not leave you, and if not—you have denied God. Later [after he married her] he [Rabba] heard that he was saying: Either he would die before her or she must die before him. Said he [Rabba] to him: Did I not tell

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you that you should not pray for this thing in this manner?

SAID Rav as he had it from Rabbi Reuben Itztrobili: From the Pentateuch and from the Prophets and from the Hagiographa—we learn that woman comes to man from God. In the Pentateuch, as it is said: "Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, The thing proceedeth from the Lord." From the Prophets, as it is said: "But his father and his mother knew not that it was of the Lord." In the Hagiographa, as it is said: "House and riches are the inheritance of fathers: and a prudent wife is from the Lord."

A MAN'S mate is from the Holy One, Blessed be He: either he goes to find her or she comes to find him.

WHO is it that is wealthy?
Said Rabbi Akiba: Whoever has a wife noted for her deeds.

WE LEARNED that: "Then the elders of his city shall call him, and speak unto him," means that they give him suitable advice, so that if he is a young boy and she is an elderly woman, if he is an elderly man and she a young girl, they say to him: What have you to do with a young girl? What have you to do with an elderly woman? Your bride is to be found among your own kind and you should not introduce disputes into your house.

"THOU hast doves' eyes" [Song of Solomon 1:15]—a bride who has lovely eyes need not have her body inspected; if her eyes are bleary, then her body requires inspection.

CONCERNING him who marries off his sons and daughters close to their season, the text says: "And thou shalt know that thy tabernacle shall be in peace."

SAID Rabbi Judah said Rab: Concerning him who marries his daughter off to an old man and him who mates a mature woman with his little son, the text says, "To add drunkenness to thirst: The Lord will not spare him" [Deut. 29, 19-20].

"DO NOT prostitute thy daughter, to cause her to be a whore" [Lev. 19, 20]; Rabbi Eliezer says: This is meant of one who marries his daughter to an old man. Rabbi Akiba says: it is meant of him who causes his full-grown daughter to wait.

WE LEARNED that Rabbi Meier used to say: Whoever marries his daughter to an ignoramus is doing the same as if he bound and laid her before a lion; just as a lion tramples his prey and then eats it without any sense of shame, so an ignoramus beats his wife and then performs his marital duty without any sense of shame.

A CERTAIN woman was once married to a scholar and used to bind the phylacteries upon his arm; then she married a tax-collector and used to bind the taxation-seals upon his arm.

OUR masters studied: How does one dance before the bride? The house of Shammai say: "She is praised according to her worth"; The house of Hillel say: "beautiful and charming bride." Said the house of Shammai to the house of Hillel: If she is lame and blind, shall they call her "beautiful and charming bride"?—and the Torah said: "Keep thee far from a false matter" [Exodus 23, 7]. Said the house of Hillel to the house of Shammai: In your opinion, if a man bought a bad bargain in the market, should it be praised or made contemptible in his eyes? To which it was said: let it be praised in his eyes. Hence our wise men said: A man's mind should always be mingled with that of his fellows.

They said of Rabbi Judah bar Elai that he used to take a branch of myrtle and dance before the bride saying: "Beautiful and charming bride."

Rav Acha used to carry the bride across his shoulders and dance.

When Rav Dimi came he said: This is how they used to sing before the bride in the West [in Palestine]: "No eye-paint, no rouge and no adornments—and still a lovely woman!"

THEY said of King Agrippa that he fell back before the bridal processions [in the streets] and the wise men praised him. Said they to him: What did you see? Said he to them: I wear a crown every day, but she wears her crown for a single hour.

RABBI AKIVA preached: Man and wife—if they succeed, the Divine Presence is between them; if not—a fire devours them.

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A WICKED woman is as bad as a rainy day.

What is a wicked woman like? . . . Rabba said: She adorns his table and turns her back upon him.

Owing to a wicked wife, old age leaps the quicker upon a man.

SAID Rabbi Judah: there are fourteen things, each of them worse than the one before: the abyss is hard, but the earth conquers it; the earth is hard, but the hills stand supreme over it; the mountain is difficult, but iron cleaves it; iron is hard, but fire penetrates it; fire is difficult, but water extinguishes it; water is difficult but the clouds suffer it; the clouds are heavy, but the wind scatters them; the wind is hard, but a wall resists it; a wall is hard, but man can tear it down; man is hard, but trouble can shake him; trouble is hard, but wine can obliterate it; wine is difficult, but sleep can make it pass away; sleep is hard, but illness can unsettle it; illness is difficult but the angel of death carries off the soul.

But a wicked woman is harder than all of these.

They said in Rav's name: Any illness, but not in the intestines, any ache, but not heartache, any ailment but a head ailment, any wickedness but a wicked woman.

PEOPLE say: If your wife is small, lean over and whisper to her.

RAV said: Let a man always be careful of his wife's sorrow; for if her tears be frequent, the penalty for her sorrow is bound to come.

WE LEARNED that Rabbi Simeon ben Elazar says:

When dealing with one's lust, with a young child or a woman, let your left hand resist them while your right hand seems to draw them closer.

RAV RECHUMI used to study the Torah before Rav in Mechoza and he was in the habit of coming to his house on Yom Kippur Eve. Once he was carried away by his studying. His wife would watch for him: He's coming now, he's coming now—and he did not come. Her heart misgave her and a tear fell from her eye. [Just then] he was sitting on the roof, and the roof gave way beneath him and he died.

HE WHO forbids his wife to lend or borrow a sieve or measuring cup, a hand-mill or stove—should give her an honorable divorce, for thereby he is giving her a bad name among her neighbors; and the wife who swears never to borrow or lend a sieve or a measuring cup, a hand-mill or a stove, and not to weave fine clothes for her sons—should be sent away dishonorably, for she gives her husband a bad name among his neighbors.

WHOEVER looks at his wife, thinking: let her die and I shall inherit what is hers—in the end she buries him.

The Nature of Woman

WHY is a man reconciled with ease, while a woman is reconciled with difficulty? In the one case, consider the stuff of which he was made, and in the other case, consider the stuff of which she was made [he of the soft earth—she of the hard bone].

WOMEN are a nation unto themselves.

TEN measures of talk were allotted to the world, women took nine and the rest of the world took one.

A WOMAN is eager to uncover her neighbor's pot to see what is cooking therein.

A WOMAN prefers painted houses and colored clothes to the eating of fatted calves.

THE wife of Rabbi Hisda was dressing up in front of her daughter-in-law. Rabbi Huna, son of Hinnana, sat before Rabbi Hisda and said: They taught this of a young girl, but not of an old woman. Said he to him: Lord, even your mother and even your mother's mother and even if she were on the brink of the grave; for they say: the sixty-year-old woman is like the six-year-old—she runs to the sound of the drum.

Two women in the house make a quarrel in the house.

A WOMAN envies nothing but her neighbor's thigh.

IN THE hour when a woman sits upon the travailing stool in childbirth she says: I shall

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never couple with my husband again. And the Holy One, Blessed be He, says to her: You shall return to your desire—you shall return to the desire of your husband.

A WOMAN desires her husband when he is setting out on a journey.

Said Rav Samuel bar Onia in the name of Rav: A woman is an unfinished instrument, nor does she make a covenant with anyone save him who makes her whole, as it is said: "For thy Maker is thine husband" [Isaiah 54:5].

Between Him and Her

"WHO teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wiser than the fowls of heaven?" [Job 35:11]. Said Rabbi Yochanan: If the Law had not been given we should have learned modesty from the cat and robbery from the ant and shame from the dove and good manners from the rooster, who uses persuasion first and then has sexual intercourse.

How does he persuade her?

Said Rab Judah said Rav: He speaks thus to her: I will get you a cloak that will reach down to your knees; afterwards he says to her: pull out my coxcomb if I can afford it; and he refrains from getting it.

RAV HUNA said: The people of Israel are holy and they do not perform their marital duty by day.

SAID Rav Judah, said Rav: The men of Jerusalem were given to obscenity. A man would say to his friend: How did you dine today, on well-kneaded bread or bread that had not been kneaded, on white wine or red wine, at a broad table or at a short table, in good company or in bad company?

Said Rav Hisda: All of these similes are used of fornication.

SAID Rabbi Yochanan: Man has a small member—if he starves it, it is satisfied, if he satisfies it, it is hungry.

SAYS Rabbi Yochanan: A lion's behind is preferable to a woman's behind.

OUR masters learned: Whoever changes money for a woman and passes it from his hand to hers only in order to look at her—even if he is learned in the Torah and known for his good deeds like Moses our teacher, he shall not be cleansed of the judgment of Hell, as it is said: "Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished" [Proverbs 11:21].

THEY taught that even the most virtuous among the virtuous cannot be appointed as a guardian against lechery.

SAID Rav Iddi: Every woman bears her weapons of defense upon her.

THEY learned: a woman can be a water-skin filled with excrement and her mouth filled with blood, but yet everyone will run after her.

"AND Adam knew his wife again" [Gen. 4:25]. Desire was added to his desire, for in the past, if he did not see her he did not desire her, but now, whether he sees her or not he desires her.

RABBI AKIBA says: Laughter and lightheadedness habituate a man to lewdness.

SAID Rabbi Isaac: From the day on which the Temple was destroyed the true flavor has been lacking from sexual intercourse and has only been granted to those committing sin, as it is said: "Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant" [Proverbs 9, 17].

SAID Rabbi Isaac: We have found in all cases of those who commit sin that he who steals enjoys and that he who is stolen from loses, he who robs enjoys and he who is robbed loses, but here both of them enjoy it. Who loses? The Holy One, Blessed be He, loses from his store of potency (in creating a bastard).

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ON THE HORIZON

ISRAELI MUSIC IN AMERICA

PETER GRADENWITZ

IT WAS on my first morning in New York City last summer that I came upon Israeli music "Made in the USA." Strolling on 57th Street, I observed among the colorful covers of a music-shop display the familiar blue and white flag. In the shop, I was offered a collection of military and folk songs from Palestine and an album entitled "Tel Aviv Hit Parade."

Great was my amazement when I discovered that most of these marching songs and "folk tunes"—not to mention the Tel Aviv "hits"—were completely unknown to me, as a Tel Aviv citizen, and that such tunes as did sound familiar had been "arranged" in so elaborate a manner as to lose their original character almost completely. The "Tel Aviv Hit Parade" album contained inferior café songs composed and played by a bandleader and recorded by him on his own initiative; many of the songs in the "Haganah" album were of the same provenance; others were Tin Pan Alley arrangements of popular tunes.

COMMERCIAL enterprise has been quick to exploit the present news value of everything connected with Palestine. Both Jews and non-Jews in America seem very interested in the cultural efforts of Israel—so why not satisfy their appetite and make a profit? With the quick dollar the ruling motivation, it is hardly surprising that the worst sentimentalism and cheapest nationalism prevail in the "Palestinian" music turned out for American consumption. It has become very difficult to make known in the United States the more serious efforts of the "genuine" Israeli composers.

Recently an American recording company sent a representative to Israel to make an album of records depicting life in a kibbutz: the writers and musicians on the spot in Palestine had to conform to the company's requirements, and a play with music was produced on records that belongs among the worst examples of maudlin commercial sentiment that have ever been perpetrated. Buyers of the album—now on sale in this country—will be led to believe that Yiddish plays a big part in kibbutz life, that the settlers have plenty of time for weeping and sentimental reminiscences, that prayers are said at table in the socialist communal dining hall, and that memories rather than practical work and planning shape the "kibbutznik's" life. The music itself is badly selected and badly recorded and was tampered with when the pressings were made here. There is no doubt that lovers of old-fashioned *Kitsch* will enjoy this outrageous fantasia (supported by prominent names who were aghast when they heard the results of their effort). But the album will spread a distorted picture of life in Israel among precisely those American Jews who ought to know the truth.

Last year the announcement of a concert of Palestinian music in New York struck my eye. The program turned out, however, to consist solely of music "made in the

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MANY American Jews look for strong and immediate enrichment of artistic endeavor here by Israeli culture; others are somewhat sceptical. In any case, the report published here indicates that the interrelation of the cultures—or at least of the culture promoters—of American Jewry and of Israel is already in the active process, with mixed results, to say the least. PETER GRADENWITZ is a leading music critic in Tel Aviv. His book *The Music of Israel* has just been published by Norton.

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USA," and the only "Palestinian composer" represented was a revered musician in his late sixties; the example of his work performed on this occasion was an insignificant piece in Hasidic style. (To American Jews, Hasidic songs have somehow become equated, quite wrongly, with Palestinian music.) This musician—whose merits lie in a quite different field—was described as one of the leaders of *young* Palestinian music.

I do not know whether any serious critic attended that particular concert; I can imagine, though, that the music played must have stifled all desire on the part of the audience to hear any more music from Palestine. A similar sort of thing must be going on all over the country. I have found that audiences in America commonly believe that all Palestinian music partakes of one variety or another of Ketelbey (of "Persian Market" and "Japanese Tea Garden" fame) or Ethelbert Nevin. There is nothing wrong with "light symphonic music" when the occasion is appropriate, but nobody would consider Ketelbey and Nevin representatives of serious British and American music.

It is equally unfortunate that the only symphonic work from Israel so far performed by a major orchestra in this country —and it was chosen from a list of some thirty works eligible—was an uncharacteristic and insignificant, if pleasant, composition of a light symphonic character that the composer himself said had been destined for amateur orchestras and popular taste. Meanwhile some Palestinian chamber music has been played in this country, but only in the choral field have important Israeli works been performed by local organizations.

To what lengths ignorance and misunderstanding can lead people may be judged from the reaction of American audiences when they hear *genuine* music from Israel. Some recordings made in Tel Aviv were presented to a group of music-lovers not long ago and they refused to accept them on the grounds that "this was definitely not Palestinian music"; and a prominent writer and composer in New York condemned Palestinian composers as following "German-radicalist" tendencies—which was his own unique interpretation of the serious efforts now being made by Israeli composers to get away from the ghetto mentality, Hasidic songs, and 19th-century Russian music.

PREJUDICE and the absence of real understanding, on the one hand, and, on the other, fears that the genuine thing may break up a profitable monopoly, determine the Jewish reaction to genuine Israeli music.

Nobody doubts that Israel has already taken the place logically hers in modern Jewish life and now acts as a center that disseminates Hebrew culture throughout the world. To be sure, Israeli cultural life is still in constant flux and can in no way be said to have as yet so crystallized as to present a clearly definable standard. Nevertheless, the Yishuv has become enough of a cultural entity to be able to express itself in literature and art. And while in music no great composer has as yet arisen to create music as unmistakably expressive of the new Israel as Aaron Copland's is of American life or Carlos Chavez's of Mexican, a distinctive style is being definitely formed, and the musical trends prevailing in Israel certainly deserve the attention of musicians.

The popular song in Israel is abandoning the Slavic models that dominated the singing of the earliest pioneers and their children; Oriental-Hebrew influences shape the popular music of the youngest generation: it is a kind of song that has been handed down through the centuries and can by no means be harmonized in Western style. The music of the symphonic and chamber music composers also acknowledges this Oriental influence, while in vocal music the technique of Oriental singing leaves a certain imprint on the setting of the Hebrew words with their characteristic prosody. Instrumentation and performance are influenced by the sounds and improvisational techniques of Oriental instrumental ensembles. Thus the atmosphere of the country—hardly describable to one who has never experienced its unique charm—seems mirrored in almost all the works composed in Israel, just as our painters convey on their canvases the unique colors of the Palestinian landscape and sky.

The older generation of composers—now in their forties and fifties—continue writing very much in the way they did back in Europe. Prominent among them is Erich-Walter Sternberg, who is concerned mostly with Biblical and Jewish themes which he puts into moderate versions of the modernist style of the 20's; while Paul Ben-Haim has become one of the protagonists of the

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"Mediterranean School," which tries to transcribe the colors of the landscape and the sounds of Oriental music. The middle generation of composers is still struggling toward an adequate expression of the Land of Israel and the life of its inhabitants; but the youngest generation, most of them Palestinian-born or at least Palestinian-bred, are already able to disregard heritage and tradition and can till a soil completely their own. They have, one is happy to say, completely outgrown the folkloristic stage—that stage in which a young nation's artists work as if nothing of importance and national distinction could possibly be created without completely renouncing independence of imagination and making copious use of folklore. The youngest generation assumes as a matter of course that their music will be just as naturally Palestinian as their own life and its ways are. Rightly, they feel that great art cannot be created by sectarianism or doctrine, but must grow out of a natural environment and a free and independent life.

THE role of Israel in contemporary music would seem to be fundamentally the same as it has been throughout the centuries. From time immemorial Israel has been a mediator between civilizations, more particularly between East and West. In the great Temple period Israel refashioned the high civilization and culture it had brought to Palestine from Egypt; in its Hebraized form this culture had a far-reaching influence on Greek and Byzantine art and formed a part of the foundation of Roman-Christian civilization. In the Middle Ages the Jews mediated between East and West in Spain and Italy and were the first to teach Western society the science and forms of music and dancing.

Since the 19th century the Orient has again proven to be attractive to composers in Western Europe. The Romantics tried to satisfy their love of the exotic by turning to "Turkish" music, Algerian melodies, Spanish exoticism, and—later—the Far East: the sublimest example of romantic "Far Eastern" music is the Jewish master Gustav Mahler's *Lied von der Erde,* which set a precedent in modern music. Here the composer not only tried to introduce exotic colors and melodic types, but also managed to achieve a style completely different from the accepted romantic texture. His lucid orchestration, his fragmentary melodies and rhythms, his treatment of the individual instruments, and his stylization of Oriental character—all these made history. But was it really such an accident that a Jewish composer should have achieved this?

Musical history appears to be even more mysterious if we turn to Arnold Schoenberg and his twelve-tone row. The twelve-tone technique, which this greatest of living masters derived from a style he developed in the 20's, makes use of a basic row of tones (not constructed but given by inspiration, just as a motif in C minor or a melody in G major was *invented,* but not *constructed,* by a "classical" composer) that serves the composer as key, scale, and material for his theme throughout the development of his piece. Is it strange that a Jewish composer should have developed this system of writing, in view of the fact—of which Schoenberg, I am sure, was unconscious—that the millennia-old technique of Oriental music is based on the same principle of composition? The Oriental *maqam* and the Hindu *raga* are—basically speaking—simple tone-rows that serve the singer or player as the key, scale, and theme of his piece.

Given the inherent tendencies in modern music toward Oriental inspiration—from the classics to Mahler and from Debussy to Bartok—it is little wonder that Schoenberg's twelve-tone technique is steadily winning new ground in the music of the world. After a short period in which twelve-tone music seemed just another *cul-de-sac* of modernism, it has now focussed the minds of some of the best composers in this country as well as in France, England, Italy, Scandinavia, and Austria. And it is only natural that Israeli composers should turn their attention to possibilities of the twelve-tone row, since this style offers so much in the way of linking East and West in music.

MANY of the composers in Israel today are conscious of their unique geographical position and of the advantages they enjoy vis-à-vis contemporary music—though few, perhaps, seem to realize the greatness of the historical mission they may be called on to fulfill. And, though the number of really and objectively important works created in the country in the last few years is relatively

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small, the interesting trends they contain warrant earnest and responsible attention from audiences and critics elsewhere. No one can blame the serious music-lover for disregarding Palestinian music on the basis of what he has heard of it in recent concerts in this country; but the time is not far off when authoritative representation of Palestinian music in America will enable the critic as well as the casual listener to judge for himself whether the "real thing" is as lamentable in style and as monstrously sentimental as the examples he now hears.

Though official Israeli circles have so far refrained from embarking on cultural propaganda and on the distribution of musical material, the last few months have seen great activity in the musical field by various bodies both in America and Israel. An Israel Music Foundation has been established in New York to distribute Israeli recordings and music in this country; and in Israel the Composers Association has founded Israeli Music Publications, which will publish, as well as record, representative works.

The New York organization has announced a production program for 1949, and has already published two of the six record albums planned. At this writing the program is confined to popular—vocal and symphonic—music, for which the producers can use the Israel Folk Symphony Orchestra (a forty-piece body sponsored by the Labor Federation for Workers' Concerts and for tours of villages and camps) and the soloists and chorus of the National Opera. The first selections are well-recorded songs and dances, but suffer from one fault: all are either composed by the conductor himself or embody his arrangements. Though Marc Lavry counts among the popular musicians of Israel and is one of the two or three most clever arrangers in the Israeli folklore vein, his style is so much of one particular color that it tires the listener to hear too much of it at a time. Yet it remains to be seen how the American public will take to these first genuine offerings from Israel.

The Israeli organization is not really a competitor of the New York firm; though some of its aims may overlap those of the Foundation, the emphasis of Israeli Music Publications is on art music proper. Folkloristic music may appear in its catalogues to fill out the general picture, but it will not hold the foreground. The first publications—available now in the United States through Hargail Music Press in New York—are Alexander Uriah Boscovich's *Semitic Suite* for piano—a suite of stylized pastorals and dances—and Oedoen Partos's *In Memoriam (Yiskor)*, originally written for solo viola and string orchestra, but published in a piano score. Most of the serious Israeli composers will soon be represented in the catalogue of the house, which also contains the first albums of the masterworks division of Zlil—Israeli Recordings. Of these, curiously enough, a Bach first-recording reached America first—played by Israel's foremost pianist and harpsichordist, Frank Pelleg—followed by an album of contemporary music performed by members of the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra and then a light symphonic album by the Giv'ati Brigade Symphony.

BETWEEN that summer morning last year when the album covers of American-made Israeli recordings startled my eyes on 57th Street and now, much development has taken place both at home in Israel and in Israel's affairs abroad. Yet I am sure that those unauthorized "musical businessmen" who prefabricate Palestinian music for American consumption will not easily be driven from the field. Israeli government circles should be urged to do their utmost to discourage these people from pursuing their harmful activities, and all possible assistance should be given to our serious Israeli composers.

As can be seen, a few good Israeli works are already available from Israeli Music Publications for performance by American and European orchestras, but official help should be offered to Israeli composers to enable them to copy more of their symphonic and chamber music in score and parts so that they can be both studied and performed elsewhere in the world. Copies should also be made available to the larger American libraries, and a "Center for Israeli Music" might well be established. The Israeli visitor to these shores will then no longer have to face the shock, both auditory and visual, of faked "Israeli" music; he will then be able to take pride in the genuine accomplishments of his compatriots and not have the unhappy task of disclaiming travesties.

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THE STUDY OF MAN

THE IDEA OF "RACE" DIES HARD

Current Report on an Old Controversy

MELVIN J. TUMIN

THE belief that the behavior of individuals is a biological legacy passed on from one generation to the next runs tenaciously through all our history. At its most dramatic, the idea is the stimulus for Nazi atrocities. But in a more persistent form that is not eliminated by military conquest, "racism" in any one of its many variants is still with us.

The persuasive argument of science which emphatically denies the popular notion of race—that behavior differences are explained by inherited physical differences—has constantly yielded to the more clear-cut evidence of people's senses that a Negro *is* different from a Chinese, that a Spaniard *can* be set apart from an American Indian—that, in truth, it is often possible to tell a Jew from a Gentile, *just* by looking at him. If this latter attitude—at least in the hands of its more reasonable proponents—neither implies a biological source for group differences nor a judgment of social inferiority or superiority, its garbled popular version inevitably has these overtones. Moreover, such vulgar racist reasoning has a way of confirming itself. Thus, in the South, Negroes are said to be congenitally dirty, uneducated, diseased, and disgruntled. By reason of these alleged disabilities they are poorly housed, inadequately schooled, improperly cared for, and—to complete the chain—are in fact disgruntled with their circumstances.

CURIOUSLY, the naturalists—biologists and physical anthropologists—have been in part responsible for perpetuating this belief that biological attributes are closely linked with behavior; paradoxically, even those among them whose theories attacked this very concept. Physical anthropologists, interested in bringing order into the variety of human physical types, have categorized, classified, and created ideal types to which various people and groups more or less conform. To be sure, even the simplest technical terms are not widely used: "Negroid," "Caucasoid," or "Mongoloid" remain in the high school textbooks. But their lay translation —"black," "white," and "yellow"—has become a conversational *fait accompli*. The prestige of science thus lends respectability to terms almost inevitably used to buttress unscientific, self-confirming attitudes.

In another sense too, the social scientists have given considerable sanction and dignity to racist ideas so popular with laymen. Thus a vast amount of time and energy has been spent combating the popular misconceptions that arose

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THE concept of "race," with its implications of superiority and inferiority, has been the target of attack by liberal social scientists for three decades, and the battle has gone on with renewed vigor since Hitler. But, paradoxically, race still remains an accepted concept even for scientists. Why this is so, and where the scientific debate about race stands today, is the subject of this appraisal by MELVIN J. TUMIN. Mr. Tumin, assistant professor of sociology and anthropology at Princeton University, here examines the latest views held by anthropologists and social scientists. Mr. Tumin is the author (with J. W. Bennett) of *Social Life: An Introductory General Sociology*, recently published by Knopf, and has begun work on a *Sociology of Demoralization*. His articles have appeared in various professional journals, and he has published a short story in *Partisan Review*. He was born in Newark in 1919, studied at Wisconsin and Northwestern Universities, and taught at Wayne University before coming to Princeton.

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from the results of intelligence tests in World War I. In attacking these unsavory conclusions the social scientists too quickly accepted the racist terms themselves. Busied with explaining away white-Negro differences in intelligence, the anthropologists neglected to attack the basic assumption implied in "white" and "black": the conception that regards the group as a cohesive and, for all practical purposes, uniform, undifferentiated blur of like-minded, like-bodied, like-thinking people, whose *group* intelligence must be vindicated by the weight of scientific evidence. Answering charges, they did not feel it urgent to consider whether, in any scientific sense, there are any such groups at all.

One suspects that many anthropologists have accepted these loaded race terms largely as a matter of tactics. It is easier—they perhaps reason—to prove that group *differences* are nonexistent than it is to convince anyone that the very image of these people as a group does violence to the vast differences between all the members of the group. In their eagerness and good will, too many social scientists have accepted the terms of the controversy without realizing these terms were unfounded and damaging to their liberal and democratic argument.

Thus for two decades now, college students have been exposed to the weighty and convincing counter-arguments of such anti-racist social scientists as Boas, Herskovits, Benedict, Julian Huxley, Paul Radin, Otto Klineberg, M. F. Ashley-Montagu, and others. In the university classroom and in their reading, they have learned the fallacies of stereotyping groups. They have learned to apply the doctrine of cultural relativity to human affairs, and to understand thereby that the habits of different human groups are worthy of respect—and in any case are not fixed by biology. They have had imparted to them Boas's finding on the plasticity, under different cultural conditions, of such presumed biologically fixed measurements as the cephalic index (the proportion of the head's breadth to its length).

Despite all this pedagogical effort, there has as yet been no apparent popular tendency to stop using the traditional term "race" (with all its inevitable trail of biased overtones), or to stop thinking of mankind as divided into three basic groups: white, black, and yellow. In fact, it may well be that the anthropologists' incessant concentration on group differences has been an important factor in the widespread fixation on the biological boundaries of different groups. The leap from the *known* insignificance of "race" differences to the recognition of their *actual* insignificance for human capacity and behavior is not often made. Instead, the taken-for-granted differences are "tolerated" rather than treated as inconsequential. And the self-confirming circle is started. The "dirty Negro" is restricted to slum areas, the "uneducated Negro" is sent to an overcrowded or to no school. . . .

The recognition of this dilemma has led to proposals of semantic reform: banish the word "race" from the vocabulary of scientists. Julian Huxley and M. F. Ashley-Montagu have reiterated the suggestion first made by J. Deniker that the term "ethnic group" be substituted for "race." In this way they hoped to bring into usage a neutral term or at least to replace a word that is loaded with invidious distinctions which have in fact never been substantiated by science. But it almost seems as if the effectiveness of the proposal to ban "race" from usage depends, like the similar proposal to forbid "armaments" and "war," on the simultaneous and universal compliance by all involved. These conditions of success are not very likely to be fulfilled in the immediate future.

ALSO, the belief in the validity of the race concept is in no sense dead in reputable scientific circles. Huxley and Ashley-Montagu by no means represent the only school of thought on the question. R. Ruggles Gates, a British geneticist who has recently published a monumental volume on *Human Ancestry* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1948), is also disturbed by the inadequacy of the term. But he substitutes in its stead a classification of human beings into *species*, a larger and presumably more fixed biological category than race. It is worth examining Gates' ideas in some detail, since they provide a prism through which many of the current theories of "race" and biological group differences are refracted.

The initial shock that one feels at hearing of this further division of human beings into species has a source other than the problems of classification it raises. In the first place, to talk of different species of men is a suggestion not often made in an age that is marked by the supremacy of the democratic state. Secondly, so much "good will" capital has been built on establishing the unity of mankind, that Gates' idea looms ominously as a threat to the tremendous investments that have been made in this

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venture. Thirdly, there is the very real danger that these different species would—as so often happens—be placed in a hierarchical structure of inferior and superior, at least in the eyes of the world in which they lived.

Concretely Gates proposes the division of man, until now subsumed under the single species of *homo sapiens,* into five species: *Homo australicus, homo capensis, homo africanus, homo mongoloideus,* and *homo caucasicus.* He suggests, in addition, that *homo sapiens* be retained as the nomenclature expressing superspecies, "including all living species, if desired."

In contrast to traditional anthropological classification, Gates's system, besides substituting the term "species" for "race," adds the species *capensis,* or Boskop man, to the traditional Caucasoid, Mongoloid, Negroid, and residual Australoid categories.

In effect, Gates is saying that the division of man into physical types is made more intelligible—and this presumably is the purpose of classificatory science—when five, rather than three or four ideal types are used; and further, that it is more accurate to call these groups "species" than "races." Gates argues that by using the word "species" he does away with the false, unscientific connotation of the term "race": that these five groups have common ancestry from which there has been a simple divergence, and replaces it with the idea that "primary so-called races of living man have risen independently from different times."

It is eminently reasonable, Gates asserts, to claim independent origin, plus considerable divergence from these origins, for the various present-day "species" of man. "We recognize different species, and even genera, of man coexisting in Pleistocene times and giving rise to such different types as the Australian Bushman and the Caucasian from different lines of descent, yet as a convention arising from man's self-conceit, we try to crowd them together into one species, implying simple divergence from one ancestry. The evidence is clear, however, that the primary so-called races of living man have arisen independently from different ancestral species in different continents at different times." Gates votes in support of Darwin's position that "a naturalist might feel himself fully justified in ranking the races of man as distinct species."

However, as Gates writes in continuation, "[Darwin] finally decides against this procedure . . . Darwin recognizes 'weighty arguments' for recognizing human species, but 'insuperable difficulties' in defining them. He concludes that the term sub-species might be used 'with much propriety,' but admits that 'from long habit the term "race" will perhaps always be employed.' . . . On page 229 he [Darwin] says that those who admit evolution 'will feel no doubt that all the races of man are descended from a single primitive stock.'" At another point, Gates quotes Darwin as saying: "So again it is almost a matter of indifference whether the so-called races of man are thus designated, or are ranked as species or sub-species; but the latter term appears the most appropriate."

It is difficult to see what comfort Gates derives in these citations from Darwin. It seems quite clear that for Darwin the matter was almost purely a decision of semantic convenience. Moreover, it is apparent that Darwin pointed toward a *single* origin rather than *separate* origins for the various human groups, however they were termed.

Gates' supporting evidence for his thesis sometimes takes oddly naive turns. He cites Darwin, again, on the differences in the mental and psychological characteristics among various groups of men: "He [Darwin] says everyone is struck with the contrast between the taciturn, even morose, aborigines of South America, and the light-hearted talkative Negroes. . . ."

This incredibly naive kind of "racist" psychology is understandable in Darwin, *circa* 1870, but an utter anomaly in a 1948 book on *Human Ancestry.* No better summary of Gates' reasoning is possible than his own words themselves when he says: "My contact with the Loucheux Indians during an expedition down the Mackenzie River in 1928 led me to regard them as temperamentally different from all other Indians, east or west. Living near the Arctic Circle, they had the lively extrovert mentality of the Eskimos. *One was left wondering whether this resulted from their Arctic environment or from crosses with the Eskimos."* (My italics—M.T.)

All this aside, however, one is left with Gates's major contention that the human animal is too diverse in its physical makeup to warrant the term "races," with the implication that it carries of single origin in a human species, and only minor divergences in the course of evolution.

The notion that men have descended from different origins, rather than from single origins,

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technically known as the polygenetic theory (by contract with monogenesis), can be shown—it seems to me—to be an utterly useless and fruitless problem. For the answer certainly seems to depend quite simply upon how far back in the evolutionary sequence one wishes to go in tracing origins. No evolutionists—not even Gates—would claim that the different groups of man come originally, let us say, from different groups of simpler pre-primate mammals. Presumably, early man's ancestors were common rather than divergent at least at some point in evolutionary time. The argument of polygenesis vs. monogenesis, therefore, reduces itself to an argument as to *which* point in evolutionary time should be taken as the proper point of departure for an analysis of human ancestry.

Gates contends, by contrast, that one must assume different ancestors for various groups of men if order and sense are to be found in present diversities. This, of course, utilizes the assumption that the present differences are too great to be accounted for in terms of common origins. Clearly, there is no large body of opinion among anthropologists which considers present differences so wide and various as to demand the assumption of multiple origins. The parsimonious principle of science recommends that, if sense can be made out of the present variety with the assumption of only a single origin, the simpler assumption is certainly preferable. Accordingly, the case for the assumption of multiple rather than single origins would seem at best very questionable. For Gates does agree, after all, that it is the primary concern in this argument to make sense out of present-day variations.

However, the question of multiple or single origin is not crucial to Gates' approach. For present-day differences between the "races" could be so great, and the degree of similarity within the group—the qualities and characteristics that group members share in common—so impressive as to argue for Gates' concept of "species."

But just what are these commonly shared characteristics? What are the systematic grounds on which Gates asserts that what were previously considered "races" are more accurately "species"? Gates makes explicit his criteria. He accepts the definition of Tate Regan: "A species is a community, or a number of related communities, whose distinctive morphological characteristics are in the opinion of competent systematists sufficiently definite to entitle it or them to a specific name." (Gates, together with other geneticists, holds that inter-species fertility—according to which all types that could produce fertile offspring with each other were considered in the same species—is not a good or sufficient criterion of species.)

Now if such a definition is to be used to determine unambiguously just what is a species, it seems essential that some of its terms be more vigorously defined: (1) What constitutes a community? (2) What is the quality and quantity of relationship that must be present before communities may be said to be related? (3) In how many and what kinds of characteristics should a community be similar to merit a specific name? (4) How much difference is "sufficiently definite" to warrant a specific name? (5) Assume, hypothetically, the problem of classifying two groups of apparently related animals: Group A exhibits similarities X, Y, and Z with Group B, but these similarities are only rough and approximate. On the other hand, Group A exhibits similarity U with Group C, but this similarity is "pronounced" and "marked." How much, by way of classification, shall one *pronounced* similarity be weighted as against *three* only *rough* and *approximate* similarities? (6) What are the criteria for a competent systematist? (7) Do these criteria of competence allow for disagreements among systematists without these disagreements being taken to signify incompetence?

All science proceeds, in the last analysis, on the basis of agreement among equally competent observers who *pursue the same methods of investigation.* In the taxonomy of those who would separate races and species, however, there are no clearly described operations that equally competent observers can repeat, nor any clearly formulated criteria by which other observers could determine whether the ascription of a species name to a given group is or is not justified. These practices seem to be more like poetic sense impressionism than science; it appears that whether or not a group should be given a specific name is a matter about which one taxonomist must *persuade* rather than *convince* other taxonomists. Thus the method of a so-called scientific taxonomy becomes more similar than it should to the method of deciding, say, whether a voice sounds like "rat's feet over broken glass" or like "liquid notes that close the eye of day."

It is precisely out of recognition of these

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problems that a "new systematics," by-passing the whole question of defining a species, has been developed. Th. Dobzhansky (*Genetics and the Origin of Species*, Columbia, 1941) writes: "Of late, the futility of attempts to find a universally valid criterion for distinguishing species has come to be fairly generally, if reluctantly, recognized." And Ernst Mayr writes in *Systematics and the Origins of Species* (Columbia, 1942). "We have an almost unlimited diversity of opinion in answer to such questions as what is a species? How do species originate? Are the systematic categories natural? And so forth."

"Systematics" has proceeded adequately without the concept of species, since in any case, to quote Ernst Mayr again, "The importance of the species as such is reduced [today], since most of the actual work is done with subdivisions of the species, such as subspecies and populations. . . . The choosing of the correct name for the analyzed taxonomic unit no longer occupies the central position of all systematic work and is less often subject to argument between fellow workers."

If the above considerations are sensible, it further follows that any argument Gates makes about how many species of man there are, is not much more than semantic cant which is of limited interest even to his own colleagues. This holds especially for his insistence that interspecies sterility is not a good criterion for the identification of species, since, in fact, the species which are presumably fertile or sterile with each other are not objectively isolatable and identifiable to begin with.

There is very little reason, then, for assuming that Gates' book, despite its impressive scholarly apparatus, makes any contribution to either systematic taxonomy or the clarification of human relationships. And since the social implications of using the term "species of man" are so considerable and so potentially destructive, it seems to me completely reasonable to recommend a thorough-going disavowal of the point of view espoused in Gates' book.

THESE same points that disprove Gates' argument are applicable to the whole problem of into how many, if any, different races human beings may be classified. As with the criteria of species, so with the criteria of race, the principles of identification are so ambiguous or so general or so diverse from one anthropologist to the other that the suggestion to drop the term from the parlance of anthropology makes taxonomic and semantic sense, even if in fact it is most difficult to realize. Take for example the usual definition of race, which reads that a race is "a relatively large number of people who share in common a number of stable inherited traits which distinguish them as a group from other groups with different hereditary endowment."

One might again quite reasonably ask: how large is a "relatively large number of people"? How much commonalty is meant by "sharing in common"? How many traits shall this indeterminate number of people share in common? How stable shall these traits be? How distinguishable from other groups must they be before they merit a specific racial name?

Nowhere in the research and writing can one find an unambiguous clarification of the problems raised by these questions. Dobzhansky has suggested that we consider a race as any group of people who share a number of genes in common. But using this criterion, it would make as much sense to talk of dimpled-knee races, large-toe races, bushy-eyebrowed races, crooked-teeth races, etc., as it does to talk of black or white or yellow skin-color races. For dimpled knees, crooked teeth, and the like, are as much under gene control as any of the more frequently encountered criteria of race membership such as skin color.

Skin color, hair texture, stature, and the others, find their way into scientific usage more often than dimpled knees and crooked teeth, not because they are better, more scientific criteria from a genetic point of view, but because the dead weight of both scientific and popular past usage is in their favor. In its failure to point this out, anthropological taxonomy has fallen into the trap of an unfounded traditionalism with all of its odious social consequences.

It is equally foolish of course to deny—in a burst of democratic zeal—that there are no physical or cultural differences among various groups of men the world over. And if for some problems, classifying these groups helps to illuminate a particular question, it is perfectly reasonable to engage in classification. However, I know of no problem in the social sciences today that is fruitfully served by classification based on inherited physical resemblances and differences. Yet the energy and time of a large number of practicing social scientists of the last quarter century has by necessity been de-

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voted to demonstrating the uselessness of racial characteristics—such is the strength of their lay and professional "racist" opponents.

WE RETURN to our initial point: the biologist and the social scientist are in measure responsible for the persistent and incorrect use of "race." They are, at least, the authors of the term even if its use in the world has been stretched far beyond their expectations. One way that this popular conception of "race" can be attacked is by dropping the word from the vocabulary of the social scientist. Even more important is the need for continuing, never-ending emphasis that "race problems" are cultural problems with biological identification marks, and that "race relations" are cultural or ethnic relations.

Such a concerted effort might well transform the traditional discussions of "race relations" into discussions of the problems of *group adjustment,* rather than continue in the vicious circle of pro-race and counter-race argument. This would be an important contribution to cutting the self-confirming chain reaction which begins with the idea of different "races," moves on to assume real and significant differences, leads to discrimination against presumably inferior groups, thus creates real behavior differences between groups, and finally concludes by reinforcing the concept of "race"—because the group in fact becomes different and recognizable.

The process of distinguishing among individuals and groups is indigenous to social life. Yet at the same time it is also possible to make these distinctions in a variety of ways, with a variety of connotations, and, most important, with a variety of intentions. To reiterate, since nothing is gained by the use of such unscientific and unpreventably invidious terms as "race" or "species," they might very profitably be dropped from the scientific vocabulary dealing with group differences and group interaction. We may then be freer to intensify the study of, and engender respect for, those *real* group differences that are the soil and raw material of democratic society.

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LETTERS FROM READERS

American Rabbis and Religion

To the Editor of Commentary:

It was with great interest that I read the article by Will Herberg in the May Commentary. The way Mr. Herberg has arrayed before us the modern Christian theological systems and the few and fragmentary European Jewish theological ideas, in juxtaposition to the vacuum in American Jewish theology, has elucidated his problem clearly and vividly: "Has Judaism still the power to speak in these days of mankind's crisis?" This procedure resembled the annotations of the Tosafoth to the text of the Talmud, in that they ask very clear, very cutting questions, but seldom are able to give an adequate answer. Mr. Herberg did not even try to answer his own question. This gesture of passivity was in itself very discouraging.

The whole picture was discouraging indeed. If it can be said, not only of the general Jewish public and the secular leaders, but even of rabbis and theologians, that they "make their interpretations and judgments, do their thinking in wholly non-religious terms," that "they can say nothing which cannot be better said by the psychologist, sociologist, or political leader"—then the situation is very, very bad. Though I do not accept such generalizations as necessarily true, nevertheless it seems to me quite symptomatic when I read in *Newsweek* an interview with a young rabbi, the successor to Rabbi Joshua Loth Liebman, who remarks that his predecessor was interested in religion and psychiatry, whereas he wants to interpret Jewish life in the American scene. This can easily be taken to mean that the talented young rabbi is less interested in religion than in the social structure of American Jewry. Observing symptoms like this, one has the feeling that Mr. Herberg was justified in putting his question and also in answering it.

If we want to find the missing answer, we must first try to find the causes of this secularization of American Jewish sentiment. These causes are manifold, involved, and divergent; like the influence of *fin de siècle* materialism, which extended well into the 20th century, the anti-religious tenets of Marxism and also the indifference of Jewish nationalism to the religious aspects of Judaism, especially to the prophetic idea of chosenness and mission, have had their effect.

But besides these universal phenomena I see another factor that has played a part in the gradual loss of interest of American Jewry in religious matters. This is the relation between American congregations and their rabbis.

Before discussing this relationship I should like to make the following remark. A man recently arrived in this country may see things which are hidden from the eyes of those who are accustomed to the established order of things. To the newcomer everything is conspicuous, even the obvious. It is therefore not unlikely that I, as a new member of the American community, and especially because of my European experiences, may observe things which, just because they are so conspicuous, can easily elude the searching look of a native investigator.

The first impression of a rabbi coming to the democratic and free atmosphere of American life is of the tremendous novelty of the organization of religion. Religious institutions are built here on the spontaneous contributions of a voluntary membership and not on compulsory taxation as in those countries where religion is still regarded as an affair of the state. This means secularization of religious life. It means also that very often the rabbis have to accept guidance and renounce leadership. They depend wholly on the good will, sometimes even the whims, of worldly leaders, on the tastes and predilections of the members. In order to secure their positions, the rabbis must conform to the opinions of those who support the congregation and who have only an inkling of what religion means.

In accordance with the American principle of democracy, rabbis are also elected only for a short term—for one, two, five years—and are subject to reelection after the lapse of their terms. (Only a very few rabbis have lifelong contracts.) If the rabbi does not cater to the opinions of the membership, he is dismissed like any employe in any business organization. So a feeling of insecurity forces the rabbi to be always on the lookout for what people expect to hear from him; he cannot decide what he wants to teach. The result is the deterioration of the

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pulpit into political oratory, into pseudo-scientific lecturing, into fashionable chit-chat, sometimes even into demagogy, story telling, and news reportage.

The ultimate effect of this maladjustment is a still further deterioration of religious thinking, because the congregation receives from the pulpit blurred and misrepresented ideas, and a distorted picture of religion. This vicious circle—so clearly described in the words of the prophet: "like priest like people"—forces religion to recede before the advance of ideologies, popular topics, pastimes, and caprices. Very illustrative in this respect is the fight between the Jewish centers and the synagogues, with the synagogues becoming more and more transformed into a semblance of the centers, though centers never seek to resemble the synagogue.

Looking deeper into this so obvious phenomenon, however, one may easily recognize some encouraging features. The element of freedom is the basic one. Against the system of compulsion prevalent in European religious life, the foundation of American religiosity is free will. Voluntary sacrifice is of much higher moral value than the securer way of levying and collecting taxes.

And the great American Jewish institutions—the seminaries, yeshivas, publication societies, synagogues and congregations, papers and periodicals—bear witness not only to the magnanimity of American Jewry but also to its religious spirit. Even if we take into account that some of these institutions were established for other than religious considerations, the religious ideal is undoubtedly there, in secular disguise. Give to the rabbis the necessary independence and security, and they certainly will see to it that this great fund of idealism will enrich the religious life of American Jewry.

RABBI FRANCIS HEVESI

Dalton, Georgia

The Hebrew Alphabet

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Ralph Weiman's article, "The Re-Creation of Hebrew," in the June COMMENTARY, raises a mechanical problem of high cultural importance. This putting a new face on an old language gives type-founders and publishers a unique opportunity to reform the contours of the alphabet.

The legitimate aim of an alphabet is legibility. Legibility requires that any two letters be easily distinguished from each other at a glance. Calligraphers, on the other hand, when not controlled by the orders of employers who demanded practicality, have tended to seek monotony so as to get a smooth-looking page. For this purpose the worst thing they have commonly done has been to make the letters of uniform parallel heavy lines connected by the most inconspicuous possible hair-lines. The results are the worst of alphabets; and the worst that I am familiar with are the Armenian, the German, and the Hebrew.

Whether the monotonous pattern thus produced is really more beautiful to the eye than the more elaborate pattern of more distinguishable letters is disputable, but is in any case of minor importance. The supreme issue is that the reader should read as easily as possible, and with as few mistakes as possible. Expert mathematicians demand that their tables of logarithms be printed with figures in which the 6 towers above the 0 and the tail of the 9 hangs below the 0, as in the pages of COMMENTARY, in order that they may consult the tables easily and make the minimum of mistakes. Children learning arithmetic are condemned to have the 6 and 0 and 9 all on a level, as in the page-numbers at the top of COMMENTARY's pages, so that the figures are as easy to confuse as possible. It is a crime against the children.

In the same way everything that makes a language hard to read is a crime against all who are learning to read; and a crime against all who, having learned to read but not without some effort (like Henry Ford, for instance), are all their lives having the effort made unnecessarily difficult; and against all who, having begun to learn to read and at once gone on to other studies in which they have to use books, are kept back in all their studies by the unnecessary amount of drudgery in reading.

Now there is too much tendency for the printer of Hebrew to think he is doing the finest work when he most closely imitates the style of the most expert calligraphers who produced the fanciest manuscripts. Thus my most recent Hebrew Bible, which undertakes to be especially finely printed, has the contrast of heavy lines and hair-lines very strong, and the contrast of round corners and sharp corners of letters very slight, so that when in Isaiah 35:1 a Beth was set instead of a Kaf, changing the familiar "blossom as the rose" into "blossom with roses," the tiny difference did not catch the eye of the proofreader of a house that claims to do the finest Bible-printing in Europe. Reform ought to move in the opposite direction. Strengthen the hair-lines; strongly round the round corners; strongly reinforce the sharp corners; increase the little tail that differentiates a Gimel from a Nun. The resultant letters will not be less historic in form, but more historic.

STEVEN T. BYINGTON

Ballard Vale, Massachusetts

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Who Is "Native Stock"?

To the Editor of Commentary:

After reading Edward Saveth's article on racist doctrine in American school textbooks ["Good Stocks and Lesser Breeds," in the May Commentary], I was reminded of Mark Twain's dictum, "It's better not to know so much than to know so many things that aren't so."

Personally, I was fortunate in escaping a great deal of elementary education. I did not attend school till the age of thirteen. Instead, I read at home, traveled, and saw many of the marvels of art and nature at first hand. Before I was twelve I had visited Italy and Greece, living in the latter country for eight months. I know the Parthenon and St. Peter's; and Homer, Herodotus, Pericles, Thucydides, Michelangelo, Murillo, and Garibaldi were much more than merely names to me. It never crossed my mind that any sane person could suppose there was an inherent inferiority in being a Greek, a Spaniard, or an Italian. On the contrary, it was the more recently civilized nations that had to prove their capacities.

As for being a Jew—well, St. Paul covered that, in the third chapter of the Epistle to the Romans: "What advantage hath the Jew? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God."

They were the native stock. The Gentiles were the immigrants.

When I did go to school, it was in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The first textbook of American history that I read was John Fiske's. I rather imagine that Cambridge knew better than to be influenced by the sort of cheap racism Dr. Saveth describes. But I cannot say positively, for I do not remember that the subject of immigration ever came up. Certainly, in all the courses I did take—in a year at the elementary school and four years at the Cambridge Latin School—there never was one word said by either text or teacher to suggest any racial grading. Everything I ever heard on the subject I heard outside the classroom.

True, my schooling was prior to 1920. The light of Lothrop Stoddard and Madison Grant had not yet shone upon the world. But since I have not been a teacher, I had no idea how deeply their influence had penetrated. I am shocked to learn it, and I think a great service has been done by exposing it.

The conclusion I come to is that the universities should take the lead, through their departments of history, social sciences, and education, and seek to disabuse the minds of educators and the public of these absurdities. I should think Harvard, under President Conant, could be counted on to show the way. Cooperation should be obtained from one or more of the great foundations, from the radio and from the press, particularly the popular magazines. I should be glad to offer my support to such a movement.

(Miss) C. I. Claflin

Buffalo, New York

A Bronxite Protests

To the Editor of Commentary:

Apropos of the article "West Bronx: Food, Shelter, Clothing," published in the June Commentary: The average housewife doesn't indulge in splurges when she has a few friends in for the evening. She couldn't afford to except on very special occasions. The average man doesn't wear silky gabardines, scratchy plaid shirts, and brilliant, broadly knotted ties. Neither do the girls wear the types of clothes Mrs. Glazer enumerates.

The whole story is a caricature of Jewish life in general à la Sam Levenson; perhaps the wealthy Jews live in such a fashion, but not the great majority.

Morton Dressler

Bronx, New York

Commentary's Influence

To the Editor of Commentary:

On a recent trip to San Francisco, where I had gone to argue for a non-discrimination ordinance to be applicable to urban redevelopment projects, I was surprised to find how effective Commentary was and how widely read in influential quarters.

On several previous occasions when the racial issue was brought up—New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia—articles in Commentary were mentioned too. I suddenly realized what an impact your magazine was having on molding opinion. Though I have written for other magazines, few seem to have so wide an influence. Commentary has really become the center around which sound thinking on racial questions revolves. The sobriety and authenticity of its approach give it an influence far beyond its limited circulation.

I think Commentary is effective because it does not push the idea down your throat and allows the writer enough room to have his say. It's been as much pleasure writing for Commentary as it is reading it. On three occasions when I wrote for other vehicles, I was impelled to cite several of its articles as source material. It is my favorite magazine and my favorite medium for civilized expression.

Charles Abrams

New York City

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BOOKS IN REVIEW

Education for Common Men

EDUCATION IN A DIVIDED WORLD. By JAMES BRYANT CONANT. Harvard University Press. 249 pp. $3.00.

Reviewed by DIANA TRILLING

WHILE it is not at all difficult to understand what Mr. Conant's book is saying about American education in general and, by extension, about American life in general, its specific educational proposals have a way of evading one's grasp. It is interesting that despite his scientific training the President of Harvard presents his ideas as vaguely or incompletely or disconnectedly as he does. True, he warns us against identifying all rational inquiry with scientific method, but one would suppose his scientific discipline would at least insure the clear ordering of his ideas. But one can read through the whole of Mr. Conant's volume without ever being sure, for example, of what he has in mind for the American college. One has the impression that, according to his plan, the college as it now exists virtually disappears in favor of a place of pre-professional training; but because one reaches this conclusion only by sorting out the statements which probably pertain only to the high school or professional school from those which may also have bearing on college education, one is never certain that this is really Mr. Conant's position.

I think this obscurity has a nameable source —it springs from a fundamental unsoundness in the structure of Mr. Conant's thought. Mr. Conant would wish thoroughly to alter the results upon education of our economic system without altering the economic system itself. This is of course impossible and must inevitably lead to half-statement and evasion.

Mr. Conant's desire not to question the economic status quo does not mean that his book is less than wholly liberal in its intention. As a matter of fact, *Education in a Divided World* is as perfect an expression as one could find of the present-day progressive mind in all its decency and fervor and high principle. A study of American education in terms of the division of the world between the democratic and Communist powers, it is an effort to formulate a program of democratic education and a program of education in democracy to combat the Soviet conviction that capitalism carries within it the seeds of its own destruction. Mr. Conant believes that only as we prove the strength of our democracy will the tension between Russia and ourselves gradually lessen and disappear. Education is the instrument of that strength. It is a more wholesome approach to foreign policy than usually appears in anti-Communist documents.

BUT if Mr. Conant's study is contemporary progressivism at its most decent, it is also contemporary progressivism in all its limitations of social and human imagination. Mr. Conant is so concerned with producing citizens that he quite forgets that citizens are people, and that education follows very private human paths in order to reach its social goals.

The President of Harvard is devoted to a concept he calls "realism." By this he means, we gather, the kind of truth which is arrived at by statistical report and sociological survey. He opposes it to the "negativism" and "utopianism" into which intellectuals bog down as they deal with educational matters. It is neither socially nor economically realistic, Mr. Conant feels, to suppose that the boy who lives in a working-class district and who expects to be, say, a truck-driver, is capable of or desirous of the same schooling as the son of the comfortable suburban middle classes. Yet our education has been directed much more to the latter than to the former, and this Mr. Conant would wish to correct. What we must do, according to Mr. Conant's plan, is cut across the classes with a common program for *all* American youth. We must, so to speak, hypothesize a common democratic man who is the object of our first and basic educational effort and for him devise a curriculum.

The curriculum Mr. Conant goes on to de-

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scribe is sufficiently loose to resist specific criticism—he tells us no more, though at great length, than that we must have studies in the humanities, the social sciences, the natural sciences; languages are not to be required though they are to be available for anybody who wants them, and similarly with mathematics, beyond such simple arithmetic and algebra as is needed to conduct the ordinary business of life. There is nothing loose, however, in Mr. Conant's statement of the orientation we are to give these studies. He announces very clearly that "the appeal must be to the students as future citizens." The purpose of our schooling is to be entirely utilitarian—to train our youth for its place in an industrialized democracy threatened by the ideology of Communism. With this in view, is there any reason for our students to read the classics of English literature? Mr. Conant's answer is a dubious affirmative—it depends upon the teacher's ability to bring the classics into line with the immediate practical interests of our youth. In other words, we must no longer take for granted, as we once did, a value in literature or in any branch of learning for its own or for our human sake.

Now, to the superficial glance this may indeed look like democratic "progress"—for what could appear more democratic than to average out the children of all classes and direct our education to the needs of the numerically dominant group, to raise the future truck-driver into the place in our educational intention once occupied by the child of the privileged middle class? But actually, of course, no one in our society is raised by Mr. Conant's scheme. On the contrary, everyone is reduced, educationally speaking, to a least common intellectual denominator. Outlining the history of educational theory, Mr. Conant dismisses the old notion of a gentleman's education as both snobbish and retrograde. He quite fails to see that it is his own attitude which is socially insidious because it fixes the class structure of our society. For instead of an education which operates on the "unrealistic" but beautifully democratic assumption that every one deserves the best schooling such as befits a "gentleman," Mr. Conant is proposing an education which in effect conspires with the common man to make him as common as possible.

Mr. Conant also fails to see and therefore to evaluate the dangerous reversal of function between home and school which is implied in his plan. On the one hand, he assigns to the school a task which was once thought largely a matter of the domestic everyday experience of Americans—their training in the precepts of democracy. On the other hand, his plan takes out of the school and assigns to the home the formulation of intellectual standards—for if we were to follow his proposals, where else except in the home would a student receive the impetus to elect such non-required subjects as languages and mathematics, or to value an education for other than its utilitarian purposes? It is a procedure which is of course analogous to the present reversal of functions between the home and certain of our private schools, where we find the school concentrating upon the emotional education of its pupils, once solely a parental responsibility, while relegating to the home the necessary educational disciplines.

But if Mr. Conant's plan in ultimate effect would reduce the general educational tone of this country to the level of our least educated and least intellectually ambitious classes, it is yet peculiarly alert to instances of special intellectual merit, many of which are now lost to society because of economic disadvantage. The day is happily past when a President of Harvard was content with a society cut to the bias of financial privilege. Mr. Conant knows that talent is not found only where the money to further it is also found, and that we cannot afford to deny advanced education to the gifted students of lower economic status. The uncommon student of whatever social group must, he feels, be separated out from the common run and, if necessary, given financial aid.

"Guidance" is Mr. Conant's mechanism for discovering and directing our especially gifted youth, for seeing that whoever is properly qualified for professional training is enabled to receive it. And I suppose it would also be Mr. Conant's answer to the objection that by throwing so much of the burden of intellectual influence upon the home his plan ultimately produces in this country the class-determined education which he so much decries in pre-Hitler Germany or pre-Laborite England. Mr. Conant's confidence in this instrument for sorting the wheat from the chaff in the student body reflects a prejudice in favor of the social sciences which is everywhere apparent in his book. It is a striking cultural rather than personal fact, I believe, that in spite of his own background, Mr. Conant puts so much higher

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a valuation upon the educative uses of the social sciences than the physical sciences; certainly he considers them far more "real" than the humanities. It is a valuation in which I cannot concur, any more than I can share Mr. Conant's faith that we can provide a person or persons (in every high school in the country?) properly equipped to judge which students have what gifts that ought to be encouraged. The problem of how best to meet the needs of the individual in a mass society is admittedly a difficult one, but I do not think it is solved by trying to find ways to sort out the exceptional student from among the vast numbers of his fellows. On the contrary, I think it is only solved by aiming the whole of our community effort as high as is reasonably possible; for by this method alone do we satisfy the higher intellectual levels of the population at the same time that we do honor, and no harm, to the lower.

But the chief weakness in Mr. Conant's reliance upon guidance does not, I think, lie in its impracticality or even in the fact that it proceeds from such a low estimate of our general potentiality. It lies, rather, in Mr. Conant's refusal to face the inherent dangers in the creation of a social agency vested with this much power. Mr. Conant uses the word guidance with patent benevolence, charging it with only the good intentions of authority. Another kind of realism than his, however, immediately raises the question of what safeguards he provides against benevolence changing into coercion. Mr. Conant's view of man in his communal role, as a citizen and a productive worker, naturally leads him to put a special stress upon the socially useful professions. When, for instance, he speaks of the use of federal funds for advanced education (never, by the way, specifying just how the financial responsibility is to be divided between government and private philanthropy), he suggests that our first scholarships might go to candidates in medicine, dentistry, public health, research in the sciences. And these are the professions which, of course, make the least appeal for protection against social dictation—there is nothing very worrisome, after all, in the idea that society, having selected the boy who should be a doctor and having trained him, should then prescribe that he serve an interneship in one of the medically underprivileged sections of the South rather than in New York City. But turning from the scientific professions to the humanistic professions, we recognize the basic dangers of a welfare society which Mr. Conant's book ignores. If we pay for the education of a boy who wishes to become a writer or composer, are we entitled to the future "guidance" of what he writes or composes?

I have described it as the fundamental unsoundness of Mr. Conant's plan that it proposes to make such drastic alterations in the educational results of our economy without altering the economy itself. As we examine his suggestions for guiding our young talent, we begin to see the extent to which he is caught on the horns of the democratic capitalistic dilemma. Free enterprise cannot exist without free education. But we cannot "orient" education without eventually orienting our enterprise as well. In the degree that we eradicate those errors and injustices which obtain in American education because of economic inequality—and we cannot deny that they are many—we are necessarily bound to work a profound revolution in our whole social and political organization. In Conant's view of things, this would undoubtedly be a revolution of the Left—a movement, certainly not to communism, but to socialism. This, however, is an option Mr. Conant cannot permit himself to make. He is as hesitant of revising the political status quo as he is convinced that it needs revising. While he believes that our democracy is so weak that our whole educational effort must be rallied to its survival and while he regards our present educational system as a menace to our national well-being, he will not elect a political system—socialism—designed to correct the injustices in our education at their source.

But in pressing Mr. Conant to confront the impasse to which he has been led, I do mean to insist, as on my own part, that socialism is our only immediate alternative. For I do not happen to agree with Mr. Conant that the errors in American education are so gross and threatening that they require a complete renovation, now, of our economic-social organization in order to be remedied, or that our democracy is as debile as he seems to think it is. If Mr. Conant considers us in such crisis, I think he must come out for the drastic political correction which logic demands—but I do not agree with him that we are in such crisis.

But in voicing an opinion like this I realize it is I who am out of tune and Mr. Conant who is in accord with the contemporary liberal tem-

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perament. An exacerbated sense of urgency, of despair about the American democratic situation, is the compelling emotion of present-day progressivism—the times are desperate, we must at once undertake some big positive action, we must stop fiddling with ideals and turn to the burning issues of reality! It is at the risk of seriousness that one dares suggest that perhaps necessity is not quite as necessary as Mr. Conant and so many other of our public-spirited persons seem to think; that it may still be possible, in education as in all spheres, to go a considerable distance working within the assumptions of a freely-growing democracy—and this despite, or indeed in the very face of, the Soviet threat. For we have lost confidence both in our freedom and in our power of growth. We have lost the faith, which should surely have been fortified by the example of England in and since the war, that in the mere ruck and confusion of human life in a democracy there is as much impulse to good sense and health as to debility.

But human life in all its complexity and error and wonder is of course precisely what the progressive mind does not permit itself to consider. So alert to the "reality" of graphs and statistics, it numbs itself to what we might call the literary realities—the *feeling* realities. When one has finished *Education in a Divided World*, when one has done trying to cope logically with Mr. Conant's proposals, there is still a simple, feeling question one wants to ask the President of Harvard. Is the kind of American his book envisions—this dull mechanical utilitarian *object*, who can never be deceived at the polls or surpassed at his job—is this the kind of individual for whom he would wish his university to exist? I suspect that, presented with the actuality his theory produces, Mr. Conant might wish to disown what he had fathered.

Towards Urban Pastoral

Go Fight City Hall. By Ethel Rosenberg, Simon and Schuster. 255 pp. $2.50.

Reviewed by Paul Goodman

There is a distressing discrepancy in this first book between the presented surface and the author's instinct for reality, everywhere underlying. The surface comedy, style, characters, and incidents range from the pleasant to the radio quarter-hour family skit; and would not be worth reviewing. But Ethel Rosenberg's deep themes are uncannily right; nor is she altogether unconscious of them. And what is remarkable, she even somewhat understands, or at least clearly expresses, the reason for the discrepancy. This makes the adventures of old Uncle Julius (friend of the BMT) well worth reviewing.

Let me put this genre study of Jewish family life in the following context: The first stories of the children of the immigrants told of the rebellion of youth, the moral clash of the two generations, problems of irreligion, sexual freedom, shame of the foreign folkways. There followed, when the young had won their battle, the romantic golden legend of the old folks, somewhat condescending, yet indicating that the young authors found the new world they had won rather cold and comfortless (the pages of Commentary have told this tale a little too often). But Ethel Rosenberg has pushed on to a new phase: to activate the warmth and personality that belongs to the golden legend precisely in the scenes and functions of the mechanical civilization, the old folks not withdrawing and lamenting, but precisely using in their personal way the culture that depersonalizes the rest. This results, of course, in comic disproportions, but more important, it suggests what all of us are concerned for, a way of looking at our City as something human again. The writer schematically underlines this theme by making her protagonist eighty years old; her youthful identification-characters are fascinated by him but are themselves simply sheepish.

The final stage of this progress is to write urban pastoral altogether, taking it for granted that our machine-ways are human-ways (that is, imagining attitudes that make them so); not only for Uncle Julius born long ago and far away, and therefore a person, but for everybody, as if we were all persons. This kind of pastoral poetry of the metropolis is what some of us have been trying to create and we welcome Ethel to our tribe.

To explain this final stage another way: The problem is to shift the scene from Brooklyn, the borough of homes and churches, officially dead with the unification of 1898—this is what gives young Brooklynites their strange charm—to Manhattan, never quite resuscitated since its demise after Horatio Alger, Jr.

Ethel understands her theme, and the *loci* of her comedy are perfectly apt: Uncle Julius

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in the subway or among the animals at the Bronx Zoo, Mrs. Rivkin with the pollster or at the conventional theatre. Consider this last scene: It is not merely the comedy of a person acting out of place (she shouts and takes part in the play), it is a humorous reaching towards the great moment in theater history, *commedia dell' arte,* which is possible again as soon as the audience learns to react, to be more than a trained spectator.

"A principle is a principle," thinks Kugel, the landlord. "This ridiculous dog has got to go. Are tenants going to rule a landlord's life? This is worse than Communism; this is anarchy." That is, the author is not unconscious of the tendency of her creative vision.

Nay, more! If we look at the secret structure of these seemingly disconnected episodes we find that their dynamic core is expressed. The old folks humanize the civilization by being themselves, but the dog that attaches himself to Uncle Julius naturalizes Uncle Julius. The power of this dog is simple, it is love; he *will* love and he won't be got rid of. Then it is said of Uncle Julius, "He *likes* the BMT, and when Mr. Pasternak likes you, do him something, he likes you to pieces." And then he visits the Zoo; while the dog becomes the means of triumph over the landlord. (The hostile landlord-force is beautifully symbolized also by Mr. Zwech's spectacularly aggressive teeth, which remind one, of course, of Virgil Partch's biting early cartoons.)

Alas! the question then arises: If Ethel Rosenberg understands so much, how is it possible for her presented surface to be so ordinary and almost commercial? The reason is given in the love affair of the young lovers. She stacks the cards towards sentimentality by making the young man admire and imitate his "good" father and the young girl her "good" mother. This makes it possible for her to omit the acid that alone can bring out our utopian pastoral etching: the clash of their morals and ours. The comedy carefully avoids deep water, that is, high comedy. Only Uncle Julius is a man. The young man is studying to be a—certified public accountant. And indeed, the young girl explains it all in the monologue: ". . . she herself fluttering between fear and enjoyment; I ask you, can a girl speak of such things to anyone, *especially* to her mother? You maybe, you can do it, but not Hannah. Remember, Hannah is a nice girl." Ethel! Trust Uncle. Stop being so nice and you'll be a fine writer.

Messenger of the King

THE DIARIES OF FRANZ KAFKA. Edited by Max Brod. Schocken Books. 2 vols. $3.75 each.

FRANZ KAFKAS GLAUBEN UND LEHRE (FRANZ KAFKA'S FAITH AND DOCTRINE). By MAX BROD. Winterthur, Mondial-Verlag. 141 pp.

FRANZ KAFKA. AN INTERPRETATION OF HIS WORKS. By HERBERT TAUBER. Yale University Press. 252 pp. $3.75.

Reviewed by HEINZ POLITZER

FRANZ KAFKA'S diaries neither complement nor explain his creative work. They merely add the mystery of his person to the mystery of his writings.

To begin with, they are not diaries. Unlike Goethe, Kafka never set much store on himself as an individual, nor did he, like Gide, look on himself as the punctually functioning conscience of his times. He always left life behind him. Writing was the road of this withdrawal, the surest, quickest, in fact the only road.

Kafka's diaries are an unremitting attempt to reach the stage of concentration in which reality fell away from him and he became immersed in that ironic transparency that is the badge of his style. In a profound sense Kafka, when he wrote, was less concerned with communicating facts, insights, or visions, than with inducing that state of creative trance in which he expressed the world in order to be able to bear it, and which he could only induce by trying to forget or at least to attenuate reality.

He did not consider himself in an autobiographical light. He strove, it is true, to explain himself, by blaming his unhappiness, which was identical with his life, on his upbringing. Franz Kafka described the Oedipus situation (most fully in his long letter to his father) with such penetration that, when we look more closely into his personality, we are inclined to believe that he never took it quite seriously, that he took it with a smile, as the penultimate word, behind which he wished to hide, at the end, a very last crucial word.

What Kafka suffered from and fled from was a sense of deficient vitality that he never

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admitted to himself. Not long ago, Willy Haas, who knew him as a young man, described a scene which clearly outlines the basic situation of the diaries: "I remember that I once met him in the street and asked him: 'How are you?' 'Very well, thank you,' he said, and turned away. But suddenly he added in a soft voice: 'Mr. Haas, I should like to lay my head on your shoulder and cry.' I was frightened. Our relations were not so intimate as to warrant such an effusion on any commonplace ground. I was worried and asked him if he were sick. He shrugged his shoulders and smiled diffidently: 'It's nothing—just life, just life in general.' And he left me."

FRANZ KAFKA was a prince, but he was also the last of his line, a Hanno Buddenbrook and Tonio Kröger in one. He knew at an early age that he would die without leaving an heir. He recognized that he had been elected to die in a state of imperfection, and this both paralyzed him and drove him forward. In blaming this on his father and his upbringing, he undertook, in the best psychoanalytical manner, to rationalize his destiny.

An entry for 1910: "My imperfection is not congenital, not earned, nevertheless I bear it better than others, by means of great labor of the imagination and sought-out expedients, bear much smaller misfortunes—a horrible wife, for instance, poverty, a miserable profession—and am at the same time not at all black in the face with despair, but rather white and red. —Perhaps my youth was too short for that, in which case, now in my forties, I still rejoice over its shortness with all my heart. . . ." But at that time he was twenty-eight years old, and of course unmarried. The mask—in reality a half-mask, for he suffered hypochondriacally from poverty and the idea that he had chosen the wrong profession—is an expression of the fear of life that he cultivated because it made him productive, and that left both him and his life fragmentary. This mask, however, indicates the exact point at which the diaries were written: the cross-roads between reality and creation, and only in this light can they be understood.

He had friends and loved them. But he doubted his own presence, sometimes he regarded himself as a dream figure; he wore masks of Chinese politeness, thus it was not really he who loved. The uniqueness of his being was a quality of style, not of character. His style was unmistakable, but his personality is hidden under a thousand husks, and behind his thousand roles lies a great fear, fear of God perhaps, fear of his father perhaps, fear of life in all probability, and assuredly a holy awe of literature.

He was a snob like Proust; the well-turned sentence became for him the content and meaning of life. The secret of his style is that his boldest aphorism retains the almost banal perfection of an everyday remark. There are no high points in his work, only an elevation of the common level, sustained by extreme exertion. The price he paid for this was: life.

HE FEARED women as he feared life. They appear more frequently and more distinctly in his dreams than in his stories, and the diaries are full of dreams. The women are not always forbidding, but even when they are friendly, they inspire fear and trembling. They are closer to the harlot than to the mother. They are those remnants of nature and corporality which Kafka had spiritualized in order to achieve the condition of detachment in which he wrote. Now they stood up and menaced him. Although he twice attempted to marry (and

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used Kierkegaard as a rationalization of his failures, as he used Freudianism in interpreting the problem of his life as a whole), there is no doubt that he loved woman most where she was farthest from life and closest to the dream: on the stage.

References to the ballerina Eduardova occur on the first page of the diaries, and it is both strange and characteristic that Kafka should at once have carried her off into his dreams. The entries concerning a Yiddish theater group in Prague are warmer and more alive than others, and this because of an actress who in her private life was a mother and thus embodied for Kafka all the tension of a woman's nature. His interest in Eastern Jewish folklore, which he later developed cautiously into something approaching a culturally accented Zionism (cf. the significant notes on "The Literature of Small Peoples"), was colored and encouraged, if not actually aroused, by this actress.

Max Brod, however, has overstressed Kafka's interest in the political aspirations of Zionism. Kafka was no more a Zionist than he was an anarchist, although he had sometimes sat in silence and eager agreement at the tables of the Prague anarchists. Reality presented itself so sharp and clear to him that he could never take any other attitude towards it than one of sympathetic irony. His study of Hebrew—and some of the notebooks in which he wrote his diaries are filled with Hebrew words—was no more, and no less for that matter, than the friendly gesture of an ambassador, coming from another realm to which alone he is responsible, who makes his bow before the court to which he has been half accredited and half banished. He was, as Franz Werfel saw him, "a messenger from above, a great chosen one" and "a messenger of the king."

He fled into his homeland when he wrote. Whether his homeland was a realm of God or merely the province of his shattered soul, whether it was the abyss of the crisis illuminated by a split ray of hope, as the Existentialists would have it, cannot be discerned from the diaries. They tell us only what we knew before: that Franz Kafka's kingdom was not of this world. And perhaps it was solely a kingdom of eminently artistic visions, self-contained and autonomous, and perhaps any road other than that of art and narrative by which one seeks access to it will lead one astray.

Therefore, in the midst of the present Kafka boom, the literary approach seems to be the

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fitting one, and surely it is the desirable antidote to the plethora of biographies and interpretations that have recently descended on Kafka. The prerequisite for this approach is indeed the release and uncensored publication of the *complete* Kafka papers.

The first volume of the *Diaries* includes the entries from 1910 to 1913, that is, from the appearance of short separate selections of *Contemplation* to the publication of *The Verdict* in Max Brod's yearbook *Arcadia;* the second volume contains the notes jotted down while Kafka was writing his *magnum opus,* especially the three great fragments, *America, The Castle,* and *The Trial.* The second volume proves beyond any shadow of a doubt the complete unity prevailing in Kafka's work. It is here that we find the first rough and ragged sketches of the great fragments like "Temptation in the Village," which foreshadows, nay, contains in a nutshell, both the plot and atmosphere of *The Castle.* Since the English edition includes first drafts—unlike the old German one—the interpreters of Kafka will be indebted to it for many a relevant insight into the integration of the poet's everyday experiences with his creative efforts.

The translation of the first volume is barely adequate; the second volume—translated by Martin Greenberg in cooperation with Hannah Arendt—is a model achievement, one of those rare instances of sincere and congenial craftsmanship.

UNDER January 17, 1911, Kafka enters: "Max read me the first act of *Abschied von der Jugend* [a youthful work of Max Brod]. How can I, as I am today, come up to it. I should have to look for a year before I found a true emotion in me. . . ."

The admiration bordering on contrition which Kafka preserved to the day of his death for his friend can be ascribed not least of all to the unbroken clarity in which the world presented itself to Brod. The contradictions of existence, which both tormented and delighted Kafka, were for Brod simplified into such categories as "noble" and "ignoble" misfortune. He shared with Kafka the perception that human existence consisted of the tension between incompatible elements; what Kafka compulsively embodied, Brod discussed.

Seen historically, Brod's interpretation of Kafka consisted in identifying Kafka's heroes primarily with modern man, the man in crisis. In so doing, he moved within the legitimate confines of Kafka's world, which, however, in his interpretive zeal, he sometimes concretized unduly. He laid the foundation of Kafka criticism by making Kafka an heir of Kierkegaard, by placing him close to Proust, and by tracing his descent from classical Judaism. He exaggerated only when he began to base his own philosophy on a rather stylized Kafkian "doctrine" and ultimately to confound the two. The sum of Brod's philosophical wisdom consists in distinguishing social tragedy and personal tragedy, while Franz Kafka's work embodies the entirety of the tragic incongruities that make up the existence of a living man.

Brod seeks a dividing line between Kafka's aphorisms and his narrative writings. The aphorisms "stand in a relation of positive faith to the metaphysical core of the world"; they are the part of his work that is oriented towards Tolstoy (and Max Brod). The narrative works, on the other hand, reveal "erring man in all the terrors of his forsakenness . . . the man who catches an echo of that primal faith only in the distance, almost unattainable, almost incomprehensible, like an obscure surmise. . . ."

But an examination of the diaries shows that the narrative works and aphorisms are both versions of the same manuscript, of the same "prayer." In his narratives, Kafka artistically spins out the experience of the everyday situation; in the aphorisms he masters the contradictions of the same situation, which can be characterized only by the use of his name: the ironic forlornness of Franz Kafka. They are all one and the same thing. All these metaphors express the same mystery, from which, it would seem, no one is so far removed as he who has almost penetrated it.

HERBERT TAUBER'S approach to Kafka depends largely on Max Brod's method, which translates single symbols into equivalents of sober everyday experience. He asserts that "Kafka avails himself of the old rights of poetic license, using landscapes to symbolize states of mind, horses and rooms as symbols of personality, men and animals to symbolize aspects of their own ego, and even [*sic!*] representing Fate as a function of character." But the symbol in modern art, and especially in Kafka's prose, does not equate a given item of reality with a single image. To be sure, Kafka's realism is symbolically intentioned. But it is an all-embracing imagery. There is no single metaphor, no individual motif open to analysis. Taken lock, stock, and

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—Lewis Gannett, N.Y. Herald Tribune

➡ "LEAVE IT TO THE PEOPLE bursts with anecdotes, most of them lively, some rowdy, some extremely droll."
—Saturday Review of Literature

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barrel, this realism of Kafka's indicates the abysmal distance between modern time and ancient ritual, between the prodigal son and the never-aging father-image. As an entity but only as an entity, this realism points at something "irreal" that Kafka is neither able nor ready to reveal. "All these parables really set out to say merely that the incomprehensible is incomprehensible, and that we already knew."

America's Political Tradition

THE AMERICAN POLITICAL TRADITION AND THE MEN WHO MADE IT. By RICHARD HOFSTADTER. Knopf. 378 pp. $4.00.

Reviewed by OSCAR HANDLIN

FOR the last quarter-century and more, a dull dead hand has rested over the writing of American political history. This aspect of the past is universally accounted important: every schoolboy can recite the roll of presidents; textbooks at every level are cluttered up with the sequence of elections. Yet, although many bits of information are current, little understanding goes with them. And some of the political confusion of the present is, no doubt, due to a failure to comprehend the past.

In good part, this deficiency is a legacy of Progressive historiography. Since the beginning of this century, the works of J. Allen Smith, Charles A. Beard, and V. L. Parrington have popularized the notion that American politics could be explained in terms of a rather simple Manichean conflict enshrined in the two-party system and based on the conflict of interests between capitalists and agrarians. This deceptive pattern occupied the attention of a whole generation of students who vainly tried to shape to it the facts of the American past. The result was that political history was rendered sterile; in this whole period, the best scholars preferred to deal with other phases of American development.

Hofstadter breaks with the pattern. He recognizes the complexity of personalities and parties, and makes no attempt to explain them in terms of the simple dichotomy of interests. On the contrary, he deals with American politics as the expression of a continuous tradition to which all the leading figures conform to a greater or lesser degree. The result is a stimulating, mature series of essays that describe the most important statesmen in the United States from the authors of the federal Constitution to Franklin Roosevelt. Written in sprightly prose, unflagging in its interest, this is popular history at its best.

GRATIFIED as we must be with what Hofstadter has given us, we must nevertheless recognize the limitations of his treatment. It is significant that there is no consistent explanation of the relationship of the individual politician to the tradition within which he operates. The Parrington-Beard school had no trouble on this score; all could be accounted for by reference, via the two parties, to the two basic economic interests. To his credit, Hofstadter abjures this facile device; but he supplies no adequate alternative to replace it.

In practice, he seems to find the tradition a source of contrariness; that is, the tradition impels individuals to play roles they would not of themselves assume. The chapter headings indicate that: "Aristocrat as Democrat," "Marx of the Master Class," "Patrician as Agitator," "Democrat as Revivalist," "Conservative as Progressive," "Conservative as Liberal," "Patrician as Opportunist." The implication is that the differences among politicians as individuals are not very important; and that questions of purpose and motivation are irrelevant. Thus, Lincoln, traditionally the embodiment of government as an instrument of morality, in this volume is described as the practical politician whose position derives from continual compromise.

This is an interesting conception. But unfortunately there is no explanation of how the tradition so operates. There is not even a consistent exposition of the substance of the tradition to hold together the series of essays. A few paragraphs in the introduction sketchily itemize some of the elements; and these, I think, are open to serious questioning. But in any case there is no attempt to apply these generalizations to the specific discussions in the body of the book.

THESE lacunae are probably inherent in Hofstadter's view of politics, which is seriously circumscribed because it takes in the politics of elections rather than the politics of government as a functioning system of power. That accounts for the omission from this volume of such important makers of the American political tradition as George Washington and John Marshall who established the roles of the executive and judicial agencies.

Similarly, Hofstadter too often regards as the

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most significant issues those which were debated in national elections rather than those which were fundamental to the operations of the polity. The 1870's and 1880's he thus describes in terms of the corruption of the spoilsmen and civil service reform. Yet these were decades of probing debate over the nature of the state, of intense agrarian and labor activity, and of the significant extension of economic regulation by the government. The narrow view of politics from the perspective of the ballot box excludes such matters, far more important in terms of the underlying tradition than the headlined scandals.

It is the signal contribution of *The American Political Tradition* again to have pointed out that such an underlying tradition exists; on that count alone the book is amply rewarding. But the tradition itself and its effect upon the men it makes still await analysis. That will be one of the pressing tasks of tomorrow's history.

The Slaughter-Bench of History

FAITH AND HISTORY. By REINHOLD NIEBUHR. Scribners. 257 pp. $3.50.

MEANING IN HISTORY. By KARL LÖWITH. University of Chicago Press. 257 pp. $4.00.

Reviewed by IRVING KRISTOL

JUDAISM is tormented by the fact that the Messiah has not come, while the gas chambers have. Christianity is tormented by the fact that the Messiah did come, almost two thousand years ago, and what difference did it make? Hegel spoke of the "slaughter-bench of history" to which mankind was delivered as part of the "cunning of reason," that is, as part of the larger scheme of historical providence; thus did he nobly synthesize, as only an academic sage could, radical suffering with radical optimism. But the majority of men are too undisciplined to submit to such a theodicy, and they persist in asking with Job: why, why? It is with the stubborn endurance of unredeemed history that these two books by Protestant theologians are concerned.

Reinhold Niebuhr has earned an enviable reputation both as man and thinker; but that does not prevent each of his successive books from being progressively less interesting. He is not saying anything he has not said before, and he seems to be less concerned with thinking

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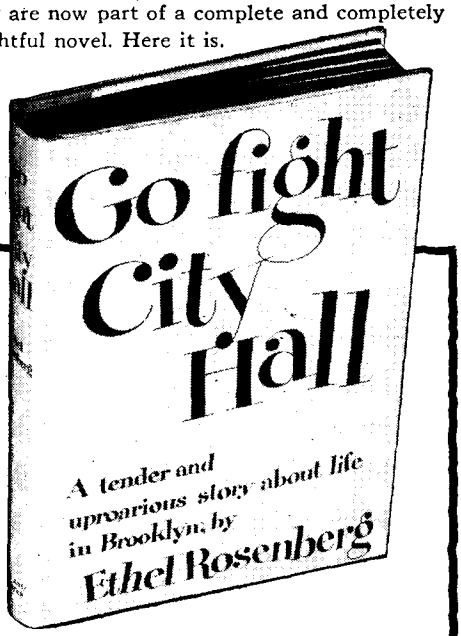

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Or maybe you'll like better Morris Bonzelman, the *nasher* who thinks of himself as a gourmet, and Mrs. Rivkin, whose passion for *The Drama* as they play it on Second Avenue is exceeded only by her desire for her daughter's marriage.

GO FIGHT CITY HALL

by ETHEL ROSENBERG

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The Code of Maimonides

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problems through than with convincing others of truths with which he is well satisfied. So earnest is he in his persuasion, so American in his need to convince his countrymen, that his theology, often accused of being pessimistic, actually has a pervasive "uplifting" tone: he has been enticed by the democratic ethos into representing ideas in their public relations, rather than in their important, private ones.

The themes, then, of *Faith and History* are not unfamiliar. The modern secular notion of progress is shown to have substituted a faith in history for a faith in Christ, or to have even identified history, as being itself redemptive, with the Christ. Evil is rooted in man's liberty, which tends to self-centeredness and which introduces "provisional meaninglessness" into history; "ultimately this rebellion of man against God is overcome by divine power." (But this crucial term, "ultimately," is never explicated.) Paganism, on the other hand, is rather cavalierly accused of not having properly appreciated the ability of human freedom to direct the natural course of affairs, and thus it was fated to be shattered by Christianity; moreover, now that a sense of meaningful history has been won, there is supposedly no return possible to a paganism which regards history as but a natural repetition of events. The ultimate ambiguities of human existence can no longer simply be endured, but "must" be overcome.

Yet the crucial question—what does this "meaningful history" *mean*?—is evaded. Of the "second coming" of Christ there is hardly a whisper in these pages. Niebuhr seems to say at times that redemption is not for history itself, but only for individuals who confess their perpetual rebelliousness against God. Here the "meaning" of history is completed by contrition: "The final revelation of New Testament faith . . . gives life a final meaning without promising the annulment of history's moral obscurities." But Niebuhr cannot really deliver history over to godlessness or blind faith: though he admits there is no Christian philosophy of history which is intellectually compelling, he believes he can "prove its relevance" by showing that those theories which hold history to be rationally intelligible end in self-contradiction and paradox.

This last is important for what it reveals about Niebuhr's method: where he can show that rational analysis leads to a paradox, he feels that he has ended in the truth. But that the human intellect is thwarted in trying to answer the last questions of "why?" does not in itself sanction a Christian answer, or any religious answer for that matter. The contradictions of human reason and human existence may have to be endured rather than overcome; that they exist does not prove that they "must" be overcome. To point to "a depth of reality where mystery impinges on meaning" is to point to a mystery—and not necessarily to God.

It is not so much a personal incapacity of Niebuhr that is involved here, as it is an intrinsic dilemma of Christianity on which he is impaled. For the modern age has broken down Christianity into its original elements—Judaism and Hellenism—and the compound cannot regain its stability. Writes Niebuhr: "With the Greeks modern culture does not require the Gospel to make life intelligible; and with the Jews it does not require the Gospel to make history meaningful." It is possible to believe that the Messiah will come, as do the Jews, who are his witnesses, and who suffer and hope and lean on the Torah. It is also possible to believe that he will not come, as did the Greeks, who resigned themselves rationally to fate while seeking to ascend to a realm of eternal truths beyond time and history. But to insist that the Messiah *has* come—how then does one go on living at the "slaughter-bench of history"?

THIS Christian dilemma is frankly confronted by Karl Löwith in his *Meaning in History*: "To the critical mind, neither a providential design nor a natural law of progressive development is discernible in the tragic human comedy of all times." He suggests an alliance between Christian faith and philosophical scepticism, in that neither sees any proof or disproof of the existence of God in "the wasteful economy of history": "The human result, though not the motivation, of scepticism and faith in regard to the outcome of history is the same: a definite resignation, the worldly brother of devotion, in the face of the incalculability and unpredictability of historical issues." Temporal events are of no consequence to a Christian faith in God "as revealed in Christ and *hidden* in nature and history." (My italics.)

Meaning in History tries to show that the modern notion of history has its roots in the Jewish-Christian eschatological pattern and culminates in the secularization of that pattern, so that the modern age is "Christian by derivation and anti-Christian by consequence." The plan of the book works backwards, with essays

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on Burckhardt, Marx, Hegel, Proudhon, Voltaire, Vico, Bossuet, Joachim of Flores, Augustine, Orosius, and the Bible. In its origins, Christianity was not a philosophy of history but, on the contrary, an announcement of the imminent end of history and of the fundamental antagonism between the kingdoms of men and the Kingdom of God. That is why the very phrase "Christian civilization," or "Christian society," is a contradiction in terms, for "Christianity is the very opposite of a religion fit for the world." Löwith goes on to write: "The mere fact that Christianity interprets itself as a New Testament, superseding an *old* one and fulfilling the promises of the latter, necessarily invites further progress and innovation, either religious or irreligious and antireligious. . . ." So, with the defeat of the original hope that the "end of days" was at hand, there began the historical adventures of Western eschatology in which the religious and anti-religious innovations spent themselves—through ecclesiastical obscurantism, medieval messianism, French Enlightenment, German Idealism and Marxism, and modern nihilism. Which brings us to our own day, no longer Christian, not Jewish, not pagan, but whistling in the dark.

WHO
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DAVID SPITZ, in one of the unique books of the year, analyses the anti-democratic thinking of such Americans as James Burnham, Lawrence Dennis, R. A. Cram, Madison Grant, E. M. Sait, Santayana, Irving Babbitt—and exposes the fallacies of their arguments. A book that minorities will read with intense interest. "A keen analysis . . . Heavily documented."—LIBRARY JOURNAL

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Frozen Statues

WHISPER MY NAME. By BURKE DAVIS. Rinehart. 282 pp. $2.75.

IN THE LAND OF JIM CROW. By RAY SPRIGLE. Simon and Schuster. 215 pp. $2.50.

Reviewed by ANATOLE BROYARD

LIKE a statue in a public park, the Jew in literature is a prey to the climate. Like a statue too, he is frozen in one posture, defined by public taste. "When General Jackson posed for his statue, he knew how one feels." Invariably, the Jew knows how one feels, and, invariably, this is the subject of the novel about the Jew. The climate now is sticky; the Jew has advanced from Shylock and Fagin to moral entrepreneur. Commerce, in *Whisper My Name,* is only the objective correlative of his creative impulse.

Thus, in *Whisper My Name,* money is the language of the Jew, and green the color of his sky; investment is his art. Dan, the Jewish hero, is a life-lover, a doer, set in the backward South like a scythe among weeds. As the eternal immigrant imbued with ambition, he resuscitates the South. His personality is an International Business Machine with a special set of moral keys to sum up the *goyim's* failures. Stocky, hairy, ruminating on his race-memory, he finds the *goy's* sex too shallow, his emotions not guttural enough, his vision lacking. He takes over the impractical, accidental *goy,* who is without destiny, who coasts unconsciously through life, and shows him the way.

BUT, unfortunately, Dan is an ambivalent, quasi-authentic Jew who conceals his true identity, and thus, inevitably, he falls for an archetypal *shiksa,* who at first seems to him a sensual specialty, like Southern-cooked chicken. He defiles her temple to savor this strange, creamy, bland American butter, whipped for centuries by a flagellant tradition. Actually, he loves Katie, a warm, vivacious newspaperwoman, the town's intellectual, but, victimized by his inauthentic Jew's compulsion, he marries this wax mannikin of Southern gentility, and forms a cash and psychological partnership with the core of the culture. After the marriage, disappointed with her sexually, he no longer makes love to her, but still lusts for her with

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his mystical assimilation-urge. For love, he keeps the *déclassée* Katie. He gives her a fur coat, which, significantly, he drapes over her nude body, so that we see the two symbols—pelt and gelt—surrealistically juxtaposed in their full ambiguity. Katie is his muse (or mother-image): thus, when she dies—of an abortion—he cannot make money any more; i.e. he is penalized for his abortiveness, for aborting his heritage, his Jewishness, and the book ends on an ominous note of retribution.

The author of *Whisper My Name* has not concealed his admiration for the Jew. Thus, Dan is an epicure, music-lover, and deep-feeler. He interrupts his poetic pursuit of the dollar long enough to sponsor a Negro for alderman and comfort the mother of a Boy Scout shot in a strike. His religious compassion is favorably compared to the hoarse cries of a fanatic cult, enriching a fakir with their spectacle frames, gold teeth, and watches. Which all goes to show that the Jew is still being okayed by self-appointed apologists, and in negative terms which are simply the inverse of all the old, false charges laid against him. "They said you weren't fit to eat with pigs, but I said you were."

JUDGING by the advertisements in Negro newspapers, many Negroes wish to whiten their skin. This desire is matched by the desire of many misguided authors to whitewash the Negro. Ray Sprigle's *In the Land of Jim Crow* is another instance of the confusion of "progressive" stock responses and real perception which obscures the discussion of minority problems today.

The book is the story of a white reporter who posed as a Negro for four weeks in the South. An excellent idea: but, in becoming a Negro, the author inevitably became a very bending-over-backward and self-conscious one. Unrealistically projecting himself into only the negative aspects of the Negro's role, he tested the limits of every situation in an abnormal manner that made the Negro's freedom seem even less than it is. Furthermore, his "guide" was chosen by Walter White, executive director of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People—which unavoidably shaped to a certain extent the kind of picture he saw. He was introduced, for the most part, to highly educated Negroes, whose conversation with a Northern stranger automatically ran to the differences between North and South. And Mr. Sprigle is not a trained anthropologist—his attitude and response, therefore, probably encouraged his hosts to speak almost exclusively of discrimination. To further indicate the dangers of autobiographical data, Gordon Allport, in *The Use of Personal Documents in Psychological Science*, points out that, in describing their lives, most people dwell on conflict areas and omit all mention of long periods of serenity. Also, it's hard to believe that there are any number of white men who can kill a Southern Negro "in his tracks, in cold blood, for fun, or for no reason at all," or "to try out a new gun," with the assurance that "nothing will happen to the white man."

On the positive side, *In the Land of Jim Crow* treats America to one of those dialogues of conscience it so urgently needs and so studiously avoids. Jim Crow is America's blow below the belt, and unprejudiced Northerners are usually content to cry "Foul!" and do no more. Down South, Jim Crow is the primitive demonstration of the Southerner's superiority, the symbol of his inability and unwillingness to establish an identity based on his own merit. It is one of those irrational American phenomena which survive like traumas of our violent and foundling birth on this continent. And it is, too, one of the best proofs—which foreign critics never tire of citing—that the American Way is still very wayward.

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Book Reviewers in this Issue

Diana Trilling reviews regularly for *The Nation*.

Paul Goodman is the author of several novels, plays, and critical works. His article "The Judaism of a Man of Letters" appeared in the September 1948 Commentary.

Heinz Politzer has been a frequent contributor to Commentary.

Oscar Handlin is assistant professor of social sciences at Harvard. He has just edited an anthology, *This Was America*.

Irving Kristol is an assistant editor of Commentary.

Anatole Broyard has contributed criticism to *Partisan Review*, Commentary, and other magazines.

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